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# HOW TO SING A SONG

THE ART OF LYRIC AND DRAMATIC INTERPRETATION

YVETTE GUILBERT

# HOW TO SING A SONG




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# HOW TO SING A SONG

## THE ART OF DRAMATIC AND LYRIC INTERPRETATION

BY

YVETTE GUILBERT

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

CLAYTON HAMILTON

*AND MANY ILLUSTRATIONS*

New York

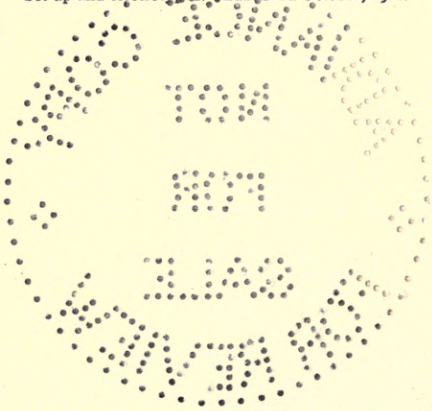
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1918

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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK
TO MY DEAR FRIENDS

ALICE AND IRENE LEWISOHN

IN AFFECTIONATE ADMIRATION
OF THEIR CREATION
THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAYHOUSE

YVETTE GUILBERT

NEW YORK, AUGUST, 1918

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# PREFACE

Verily I say unto you:
One must never be discouraged!
Never be discouraged at learning!
Never be discouraged by difficulties!
Never be discouraged, when progress is slow,
Never be discouraged, where success lags!
Never be discouraged by the indifference of the crowd,
Never be discouraged by the ignorance of the crowd!
Never be discouraged at the lack of comprehension of whosoever it may be!
Never be discouraged through the faults of others,
Never be discouraged through your own fault!

All comes to those who will, that all shall come —
God does not admit that good and fine efforts should be in vain —
An artist is a priest — a divine servant!

The Bible says unto the children of Israel:

"There is a time for every thing,
A time for peace —
And a time for war —
A time for sorrow
And a time for rejoicing —

A time for health —
And a time for sickness —
A time for poverty —
And a time for wealth —
A time to work —
And a time to rest —
A time to weep —
And a time to laugh!

And I say unto the artist: Courage!
There is a time for our defeats,
A time for our victories!
On condition that there be:

A time to look —
A time to listen —
A time to love —
A time to suffer —
A time to endure —
A time to forgive —
A time to learn —
A time to understand —
A time to absorb —
A time to digest —
A time to reflect —
A time to mature —
A time to bloom —
A time to expand —
A time to create —
A time to reproduce —
A time to sow —

And then will come the time to reap!

What is an artist's life?

A time when you are dependent on others —
A time when others are dependent on you!
A time when the populace despises you —
A time when you despise the populace!
A time when the artist knocks in vain at the gates of Art —
A time when Art shelters the artist!
A time when money insults the artist —
A time when the artist insults money!
A time when the work of an artist is obtainable for a few cents,
A time when untold millions could not purchase that same work!
A time when, through the fault of the nation, artists perish —
A time when, through the lack of artists, the nation perishes!
A time when your native town makes your reputation —
A time when you make the reputation of your town!
A time when, being envied by too many, you suffer —
A time when, being envied by too few, you suffer!
A time when you are a unit —
A time when you are multiple!
A time when you will specialize —
A time when you will universalize!
A time when you will be the prisoner of your formula —
A time when you will escape from your formula!

There is:
A time when your reputation makes your talent —
A time when your talent makes your reputation!
A time when your renown is greater than your genius —
A time when your genius is greater than your renown!
A time when your efforts are so low that the crowd can reach them —
A time when your efforts are so high that they surpass the crowd!

There is:
A time when nothing counts except what you do —
A time when what you do counts for nothing!

There is:
A time when you fancy you are weary of effort —
A time which calls out to you: Still greater efforts in your effort!

There is:
A time when it seems you have nothing more to say —
A time which cries out to you: Fool, does life ever stop?

There is:
A time which disgusts you with the present —
A time which cries out to you: And what of the past!

There is:
A time which says to you: Ah, we know of what has gone by —
A time which cries out to you: What of the future?

There is:

A time for meditation . . . the fear of Time . . . in face of the formidable task to be accomplished —

A time which cries out to you: Lose not your time in looking at the clock! WORK!!

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# INTRODUCTION

Two elements must be conjoined in any veritable work of art, — first, something to say, and second, an ability to say it by means of some articulate method of expression.

The first element is original and incommunicable; it exists or it does not exist; and nothing can be done to stimulate or stay it. It is, indeed, an aspect of that "wisdom" of which Walt Whitman has so eloquently said, —

"Wisdom cannot be pass'd from one having it, to another not having it;
Wisdom is of the Soul, is not susceptible of proof, is its own proof; . . .
Something there is in the float of the sight of things that provokes it out of the Soul."

Wisdom is the fruit of character; and character cannot be taught. It must grow endogenously like a tree, with roots long nourished in the soil of observation and experience. The character of any man at any moment is nothing more nor less than a remembered record of all that he has ever been. To have something to say, it is necessary to have lived, and to be able to remember.

But the second essential element of art — an ability to say things — can and must be learned,

and can be taught. It will not grow up of itself, as a component part of character, however longingly it may be watched and waited for. It can be acquired only by hard labor and incessant practice; but this labor may be lightened by following the precepts and examples of great artists who have gone before. In each of the arts, there is a codified technique which is known to every sound practitioner and is passed down from generation to generation. Raphael was a pupil of Perugino, and Rubens was the teacher of Van Dyck.

The average aspirant, in the eager period of early youth, is inclined to worry overmuch about the things he has to say, whereas these things are very likely to be negligible. Except in rare instances, like that of Keats, it may be assumed that nobody has anything to say till after he is thirty; and while the tree of character is growing, it is best to leave it alone and not to pluck it up continually for the purpose of inspecting its roots. The years of youth may be more profitably spent in learning the technique of some articulate medium of expression. Granted the initial gift of talent, an apprentice, in the decade of his twenties, can learn by constant practice how to draw or paint or write or sing or act. He can acquire an ability to say things, before yet he is endowed with anything to say. Then, later, when the time comes to express himself, because his character at last is worthy of expression, his message to the world will flow forth fluently and gracefully. This, of course, was what was in the mind of Robert Louis Stevenson when he wrote to a

young art-student, Trevor Haddon, — "In your own art, bow your head over technique. Think of technique when you rise and when you go to bed. Forget purposes in the meanwhile; get to love technical processes, to glory in technical successes; get to see the world entirely through technical spectacles, to see it entirely in terms of what you can do. Then when you have anything to say, the language will be apt and copious."

In the present book, Madame Yvette Guilbert expounds the basic principles of the art of dramatic and lyric interpretation, — an art of which she is an absolute and perfect master. This treatise is intended primarily as a manual of craftsmanship, for the benefit of beginners who aspire to follow in her footsteps. But, to me at least, the volume has a deeper meaning and teaches a more important lesson; for it demonstrates conclusively that technical accomplishment is made, not born, — that it can and must be learned, and can be taught.

This is a lesson that is sorely needed at the present time, when an anarchic group of so-called "critics" is springing up to celebrate an anarchic group of so-called "artists" who noisily pretend that technique is of no account, because they are too lazy to acquire it. The heresy that anybody can express himself spontaneously without having mastered, by previous practice, an articulate medium of expression cannot be too utterly condemned.

It is scarcely necessary, in this place, to state that Madame Yvette Guilbert is the finest artist, living in the world to-day, who does anything of

any kind upon the stage. This superlative opinion has been expressed, at one time or another in the last ten years, by nearly all the leading critics of the leading nations. But the very perfectness of her art might allure the public to fall into the heresy of thinking that effects produced with such apparent ease have been arrived at without antecedent effort. This little book will demonstrate, however, that nothing is easy in art, and that the appearance of spontaneity can be acquired only by long years of earnest study and indefatigable practice.

Madame Yvette Guilbert was always a great woman. She told me once that, owing to the advantages of her birth and bringing-up in the *bourgeoisie*, or working-class, of Paris, she knew nearly as much of human life and understood nearly as much of human character at the early age of fourteen as she knows and understands to-day. She was gifted by nature with the penetrating faculty of observation and the world-embracing faculty of sympathy. But these gifts alone could never have made her the perfect artist that she has become. Dante said of his century of cantos that the labor of them had kept him lean for twenty years; and Madame Yvette Guilbert has devoted even a longer time than that to the tireless task of perfecting the technique of her art.

The author of *How to Sing a Song* is not accustomed to write books, nor does she aspire to any literary laurels. Furthermore, in the present instance, she is writing in an unfamiliar language, less fitted than her own to express the many move-

ments of a mind that is peculiarly and typically French. Yet, to me at least, this little volume reveals many of the most essential traits of literature. It is not so much a text-book as a personal expression of the ecstasy of a great artist in the propagation of her craft. Much of it, unconsciously, is autobiographical; and even when the author endeavors to be most strictly didactic, the perfume of her personality irradiates her writing.

For the general reader, therefore, who entertains no aspiration on his own account to learn "how to sing a song," the book is valuable because it offers an opportunity to become more nearly acquainted with one of the great women of the world. In a recent letter to myself she said, — "*Puisse mon livre ouvrir les idées, les oreilles, les yeux, et les cœurs de ceux qui le liront, pour y chercher la clef de la célébrité, ou de la fortune! . . . Ils n'y trouveront que la clef de la conscience dans le travail, et la clef de l'Église de l'humaine Beauté.*"

CLAYTON HAMILTON.

NEW YORK CITY, 1918.

NOTE. — The drawings in this book are made by Claire Avery; the photographs by Alice Boughton.

# THE ART OF DRAMATIC AND LYRIC INTERPRETATION

## 1

## THE SPECIAL VOCAL TECHNIQUE NECESSARY TO A SINGER OF SONGS, AS COMPARED TO THAT OF AN OPERATIC SINGER

THIS little book is written with the purpose to help those who — mistaken about what is Art — will vainly struggle against their proper ignorance.

Men sometimes make war on behalf of a humanitarian ideal, artists always struggle for the same ideal, but the former believe they will save the world by spreading wholesale Death, the latter by universal Love.

For Art is Love!

Love of the Creation of God!

Love of Nature!

Love of Life!

Love of Creation by sculpture, by painting, by music, by poetry!

Know your fellow-creature as you know yourself and you will be an artist; love your fellow-creature as yourself and you will be a genius; worship God and his creation, sing its praise and you will be immortal!

Let the mercenary disdain its beauties, let the crowd remain faithful to its slavish task, let it remain the prisoner of a narrow, curbed mentality — but you! — Free yourself!

But beware!

If you want to become an artist, you must understand "Art" — art in all forms that every art embraces.

Music without color lacks plasticity . . . it is unharmonious!

Painting without plasticity lacks harmony . . . it is colorless.

Sculpture without harmony lacks color . . . it is shapeless.

Poetry without form, color, and rhythm lacks sculpture, painting, and music, and is therefore without art.

A singer with the most splendid voice may be often a deplorable artist, but as the crowd makes him a "success," every one who is blessed with the same singing mechanism wants to become the same "success."

But if you do not possess the splendid voice?

Then you decide to become a "Singer of Songs," as it is "so easy."

Because you ignore the art of the interpretation of a song!

Because you ignore the fact that there is in art no scale of "easiness," of "facility"!

Because you ignore the fact that art to be great, to be perfect, to be superior, must include all the arts in the one you choose!

Because you ignore the fact that the art which appears to you the most simple, the "easiest," requires the longest time for its perfection!

So, if you want to make a real career as a singer of songs, the career of a *Chansonneur*, you must have a long special voice training.

You must not be either a soprano or contralto, either a barytone, bass, or tenor, you must be a soprano and contralto, you must be barytone, bass, and tenor, all in one.

This will prevent you from singing a song as a "uniform" work, like an operatic part.

The singers who have what is called "one register" normally placed, like operatic stars, are out of question for the art of singing a song. Their voices can be as fine as possible, if they

are not multiple, they will not be able to render the song "justly," they will deform it by too rich or too stiff a voice — always limited to their register.

I repeat the *Chansonneur* must have no limit in expressing herself or himself. The minute the *Chansonneur* is limited, he is not any more a singer of songs.

Because to sing songs means possessing all possibilities to sing all songs.

*La Chanson* is not one song. *La Chanson* is multiple, and you must have multiple powers, multiple colors, multiple voices.

We singers of songs, we are painters. Our voices are there to color the story, the picture we exhibit. We must illustrate our songs as an actress her part with many colors, that is to say, many vocal colors, and so help the public to see with their eyes what they hear with their ears.

Only a series of voices can produce this.

Of course I know how dangerous this is for the voice, and for this reason I never advise a student to indulge in such vocal gymnastics, as the beginner does not know how to direct the vocal mechanism of his voice.

For instance, it gives some songs more color if you sing them *en poitrine* (on the chest regis-

ter), instead of using the passage in which the voice ought to be placed. It would be incorrect in operatic technique.

But if I have a pupil who possesses all other qualities which are required for a singer of songs; that is, fantasy, originality, the power of comic expression, the power of tragic expression, literary culture, instinct of the plastic, sense of observation, a face with expressive eyes and mouth, an immense sensitiveness — I direct him or her to acquire all registers, all vocal colors necessary to express songs of all characters.

I met in the early beginning of my career two very famous musicians with whom I discussed this very subject. The one was my *célèbre compatriote* Gounod.

Gounod told me very often: "Mademoiselle Yvette, for God's sake, do not take singing lessons. Your professor will kill your power of expression by giving you a 'pretty voice,' which means a 'flat' voice. And then you will be one of the thousands. You will be like Judic, whose voice is pretty, charming, and nothing else. We have had Judics before Judic, and we shall have Judics after Judic. You yourself have created your style, preserve it."

On one of his last visits to Paris, Verdi came to my house. We were speaking of interpretation. I asked him to explain to me why he had composed in "La Traviata," for the supper scene, the spirit of which was so sentimental, such a vivacious music almost in a tempo of waltz. "You see," replied Verdi, "if we had on the operatic stage singers of songs such as you are, we would write music appropriate to the words; but we have only more or less beautiful voices for arias, and we write music for arias, arias to make shine the soprano, arias for the contralto, arias for the tenor, etc."

You hear these authoritative lips confirm the idea that there is a difference between the operatic singer and the singer of songs.

And there is a difference between the vocal technique of a singer of songs and the vocal technique of an opera singer.

The singer of songs has to break the uniformity of his register. He will acquire it by learning first to speak, by speaking with "color," by reciting.

He will become accustomed to place his voice "on the lips," in the *masque*, as we say in French, and not in the nose or in the throat.

His speaking voice will be in turn sweet or deep, full of *nuances* (shades) and he will be

able to give to his singing voice the same shades. He will become accustomed to sing as a bass with the chest (his medium, however, must be splendidly posed; this is absolutely important in singing songs) and his *voix de tête* (head notes) will replace the ample high octave of the operatic singer.

The singer of a song should be able to sing with the voice of a child, the voice of a boy, of a girl, of a young man, of an old man, of a brutal man, of a sweet woman, of a priest, of a soldier; his voice should have all the colors necessary to express all human feelings, all the thousand shades of human emotions, of human joys, of human sorrows, of human perplexity, all the colors necessary to illuminate the words of a text.

Speaking of the supreme art of coloring the words, which in dramatic and in lyric art is of the first importance, Jules Lemaître, the great French dramatic critic, says of the great artist Eleanora Duse, that she is a genius of interpretation, *plastiquement et mimiquement parlant* — from a plastic and mimic point of view. He adds:

"Those, however, who, as I, do not know the Italian language, cannot judge absolutely and completely the total value of her art. The shading, the

coloring of her diction, escape my notion. This is a condition which is a prejudice to the artist. The best comedians obtain great effects of expression by their science of coloring and by their art of pronunciation.

"The knowledge of the contents of the scene, the comprehension one might have of the subject of the play — if one does not speak the Italian language — is not sufficient for artistically appreciating the talent or the dramatic 'science' of the artist. Therefore, an entire part of her art — and a very important one — escapes us. We are captivated by a voice which is pure, clear, and sensible, and by the emotional quality of its intonations."

It is evident that the public submits to the charm of that music which is the Italian language, as it often submits to the music of the beautiful language of France, ignoring how it is sometimes disfigured, horribly pronounced, badly colored and still worse shaded by dramatic artists without the necessary vocal science. These make out of the art of declamation an art of deformation.

The great art of "coloring" the word is just as important as the art of designing for the painter, and again the great art of "drawing" the word is just as indispensable as the art of coloring for the painter.

Every word has its form and its color, its

light and its shade. One does not for example pronounce the word *ciel* (heaven) as one pronounces the word *herbe* (grass). The words *chaud* and *froid* (hot and cold) have equal value of accent; also *beau* and *laid* (pretty and ugly), but the word *nuage* (cloud) is more ample, more majestic than the word *pluie* (rain). The word *merveilleux* (marvelous) is more accentuated than the word *splendide* (splendid).

If a skilled dramatic artist has to say: *La neige couvrait la terre* (Snow covered the earth) he will pronounce the word *neige* with a long accent: *la nei-ge*, as if, musically speaking, the value was a half note (*une blanche*) for the first syllable and a quarter note (*une noire*) for the second.

*La nei—ge couvrait la terre!*



The word *couvrait* will be pronounced amply, largely; to the word *terre* will be given the same value of accent.

The artist who will pronounce the phrase "*la neige couvrait la terre*" dryly, without visual and intellectual coloring, in a word, without science, will be an inferior artist.

Therefore, as I said before, if you possess the

art of coloring the words, you have the first stones of the house you wish to build up.

Now, the second indispensable point is how to breathe, respiration! Respiration is only a question of cleverness. Everybody can learn how to breathe in a short time; it is very simple.

First you must practice the purely physical movements of respiration. First absorb slowly the air and keep it, with mouth closed, in the upper part of your chest, so to say, on the level of your shoulders, as long as you can and until you have the sensation of an inflated chest.

When you feel you cannot any longer retain the absorbed air, lower your chest; that means let it empty itself of the large dose of air you have absorbed, but very slowly, extremely slowly, almost imperceptibly.

If you practice this every day for a quarter of an hour, you will at the end be able to sing in one single respiration, which you take before starting, the twenty-four measures of the following song: *Un Mouvement de Curiosité.*

## UN MOUVEMENT DE CURIOSITÉ

*Refrain:*

Hélas maman, pardonnez je vous prie
Un mouvement de curiosité.

1

Je me croyais seulette en la prairie
Quant à mes yeux Colinet s'est presenté;
Hélas maman, pardonnez je vous prie
Un mouvement de curiosité.

2

Vous le savez dans le village on publie
Que ce berger n'a pas d'égal en beauté;
Hélas maman, pardonnez je vous prie
Un mouvement de curiosité.

3

En m'abordant sur l'herbette fleurie
A mes genoux à l'instant il s'est jeté;
Hélas maman, pardonnez je vous prie
Un mouvement de curiosité.

4

Au même instant sa bouche à la mienne unie
Fit naître en moi le goût de la volupté;
Hélas maman, pardonnez je vous prie
Un mouvement de curiosité.

5

Il me vantait les nœuds dont l'amour nous lie,
J'ai voulu voir s'il disait la vérité;
Hélas maman, pardonnez je vous prie
Un mouvement de curiosité.

6

Si ce plaisir est le charme de la vie,
Est-ce un grand mal, maman, d'y avoir goûté?
Hélas maman, pardonnez je vous prie
Un mouvement de curiosité.


1 2 3
He - las! Ma - man . par - don - nez je vous
4 5 6 7
pri - e un mou - ve - ment de cu - ri - o - si -
8 9 10 11
té Je me croy - ois seul - et - te dans la Prai -
12 13 14
rie quand à mes yeux Co - li - net s'est
15 16 17 18
pré - sent - té. He - las! Ma - man
19 20
par - don - nez je vous prie - e
21 22 23 24
un mou - ve ment de cu - ri - o - si - té.

When I taught myself how to breathe, I used the foregoing song as an example for controlling my respiration. In the beginning I sang four measures and I was obliged to take breath.

I then began my physical exercises. Three weeks later I could sing eight measures before again taking breath and was able to complete the whole refrain with the sole respiration taken at the start.

Then I continued to practice the prolonging of my respiration patiently, methodically, and slowly, and could add after five weeks another eight measures of the first stanza.

It was, however, martyrdom when I tried to stop at the *point d'orgue* (organ point) of the seventeenth measure. The stop, indeed, was necessary for the sake of preserving the special and characteristic grace of this eighteenth century music in which the song is written.

I succeeded by practicing and was able to sing the first sixteen measures with the single respiration *d'attaque.*

At last to make the virtuosity triumph it was necessary to add to the verse the refrain of the song. That means another five measures — which was easy, owing to the gymnastic exercises practiced with the same refrain at the beginning of the song.

At the end of another ten days I was able to sing the twenty-four measures of the song with one single respiration taken at the start. It took therefore almost ten weeks to learn respiration, and to control it in such a way as to be absolute master of it.

Another example: Let somebody beat the measure at 2–4 and speak out the following notes:

do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si, do, si, la, sol, fa, mi, re.

With a moderate tempo one ought to be able ten times to make the ascent and descent of the gamut, six times when the chest is filled with air and four times when the air escapes.

Now instead of pronouncing the notes by speaking them, sing them, vocalize them, and one will be surprised to see how, by this simple exercise, one can obtain the absolute control of respiration which, after all, is only a question of will and patience.

To conclude, here are the first points to acquire.

A special vocal technique for recitation or for singing songs, and also respiration.

Now I will give an illustration of what I have said about coloring the words. I will sing, for example, *St. Nicolas,* in which song you will see the different colors I mean.

A *Chansonneur* must be, not only a painter, with his voice, but a sculptor with a plastic art, a poet of the soul, and see beauty everywhere!

In *St. Nicolas* there are many kinds of voices to express by colors.

1. The voice of the artist interpreting the song, which is neutral.
2. The voice of the butcher, brown.
3. The speaking voice of St. Nicholas, red, large, and posed in the grave register.
4. The child's voice, a white voice.

LA LÉGENDE DE SAINT NICOLAS

Il était trois petits enfants
Qui s'en allaient glaner aux champs.

S'en vont un soir chez un boucher:
Boucher, voudrais-tu nous loger?
Entrez, entrez, petits enfants,
Y a d'la place assurément.
Il était, etc.

Ils n'étaient pas sitôt entrés,
Que le boucher les a tués!
Les a coupés en p'tits morceaux,
Mis au saloir comme pourceaux!
Il était, etc.

Saint Nicolas, au bout d'sept ans,
Vint à passer dedans ce champ.
Il s'en allait chez le boucher:
Boucher, voudrais-tu me loger?
Il était, etc.

Entrez, entrez, Saint Nicolas !
Y a d'la place, il n'en manqu'pas.
Il n'était pas sitôt entré
Qu'il a demandé à souper.
Il était, etc.
Du p'tit salé je veux avoir !
Qu'il y a sept ans qu'est dans l'saloir !
Quand le boucher entendit ça,
Hors de sa porte il s'enfuya.
Il était, etc.
Boucher, boucher ! ne t'enfuis pas !
R'pens-toi ! Dieu te pardonnera !
Saint Nicolas alla s'asseoir
Dessus le bord de ce saloir.
Il était, etc.
Petits enfants qui dormez là —
Je suis le grand Saint Nicolas.
Et le Saint étendit trois doigts :
Les petits se relèv'nt tous les trois ! . . .
Il était, etc.
Le premier dit . . . J'ai bien dormi !
Et moi ! dit le second, aussi !
Et le troisième répondit :
Je croyais être au paradis !
Il était, etc.

The song *La Légende de Saint Nicolas* begins with the refrain told by the interpreter of the song with a neutral voice :

Il était trois petits enfants
Qui s'en allaient glaner aux champs.

S'en vont un soir chez un boucher :

THE CHILDREN

(White voice)

Boucher, voudras-tu nous loger?
(This with a childish supplication)

THE BUTCHER

(With a hard, a brown voice)

Entrez, entrez, petits enfants,
Y a d'la place assurément.

INTERPRETER

(Neutral voice)

*Refrain:*

Il était trois petits enfants
Qui s'en allaient glaner aux champs.

In the second verse the interpreter is himself frightened by the crime he tells. His voice must show emotion; his is a trembling voice now, stirred by the action of the criminal butcher; he sings with a terrified voice:

Ils n'étaient pas sitôt entrés,
Que le boucher les a tués!
Les a coupés en p'tits morceaux,
Mis au saloir comme pourceaux!

*Refrain:*

Il était trois petits enfants
Qui s'en allaient glaner aux champs.

In this refrain the interpreter raises the expression of terror to the climax.

In the third verse:

INTERPRETER

(Again neutral voice)

Saint Nicolas au bout de sept ans,
Vint à passer dedans ce champ,
Il s'en allait chez le boucher . . .

SAINT NICHOLAS

(Red voice, luminous voice, nobly posed, grave register)

Boucher . . . voudrais-tu me loger?

BUTCHER

(Humble voice, submissive to the Saint)

Entrez, entrez, Saint Nicolas,
Y a d'la place, y n'en manqu'pas!

INTERPRETER

Il n'était pas sitôt entré,
Qu'il a demandé à souper.

*Refrain:*

Il était trois petits enfants
Qui s'en allaient glaner aux champs.

In this refrain the interpreter will reveal how afraid he is of what he knows about the crime

committed in the very room in which the Saint is seated. There must be anxiety in his voice.

SAINT NICHOLAS

(Imperative voice, large, grave, severe, and accusing)

Du p'tit salé je veux avoir !
Qu'il y a sept ans qu'est dans l'saloir !

INTERPRETER

(Voice exasperated by emotion in face of the accusation of the Saint and his revelation of the crime)

Quand le boucher entendit ça,
Hors de sa porte il s'enfuya !

Here the interpreter has a splendid opportunity of coloring. If he has a far-reaching voice, ringing out the vowel *a* in the word *s'enfuya*, he may produce a long scream: *aaaaaaaaa!* which can be interpreted as a long scream of terror uttered by the butcher who sees himself discovered by the Saint. The interpreter has in that long scream an immense effect of coloration, visualizing the flight of the butcher out of his home.

It ought to be sung:

Quand le boucher entendit ça,
Hors de sa porte il s'enfuya . . . ah !

*Refrain:*

Il était trois petits enfants,
Qui s'en allaient glaner aux champs!

Of course the refrain must also express a share of the butcher's fright, because in his conscience now stirred up, he will revive the scene of his crime when the children innocently entered his house.

SAINT NICHOLAS

(With an inflexible voice of severity, not a baritone but bass voice, deep register, more speaking than singing)

Boucher, boucher! ne t'enfuis pas!
R'pens-toi! Dieu te pardonnera!

INTERPRETER

(With a voice specially rhythmic and essentially classic)

Saint Nicolas alla s'asseoir
Dessus le bord de ce saloir.

*Refrain:*

Il était trois petits enfants,
Qui s'en allaient glaner aux champs.

SAINT NICHOLAS

(Voice mystic, inspired, and tender)

Petits enfants qui dormez là —
Je suis le grand Saint Nicolas!

INTERPRETER

(Voice veiled by the emotion of the miracle which is going to be accomplished)

Et le Saint étendit trois doigts,
Les petits se relèv'nt tous les trois !
Il était trois petits enfants
Qui s'en allaient glaner aux champs.

FIRST CHILD

(Voice of about ten years)

Le premier dit . . . J'ai bien dormi !

SECOND CHILD

(Voice of about seven years, high-pitched)

Et moi ! dit le second, aussi !

THIRD CHILD

(Very high, like a baby)

Je croyais être au paradis !

## 2

## HOW TO PENETRATE AND AMPLIFY THE TEXT

WHAT is the text of a song to an artist? Just a little thread, a guide helping you to understand the ideas, the thought of a poem, of a song. It is not from the written words that the meaning of a song is derived, but it is the thought that inspires the words of a verse. The words are nothing but an accessory.

When I began my career as a singer, I gave nearly all the subjects I wished to sing to my authors. I even often roughly wrote the verses and they worked on my schedule.

Starting on the principle that the singer must be the creator of his song, the artist must deeply penetrate the idea of the author. That which is written helps to read that which is not written, and of what is not written you must make your *pièce de résistance* in the interpretation. The discovery of it will of course show your talent. But if you have no talent, why sing songs? In French songs we have

many opportunities to show our intelligence, our *esprit*, because our songs have refrains, and they are not made for nothing! They are always in intelligent and direct correspondence with the verse itself. The difficulty is to vary the expression of each one, but the difficulty is small indeed. Take for instance *La Glu* with its *Lonlon laire, lonlon la.* These words give all the meaning not written, and augment all the force of the tragic thought!

How you can amplify your text with this refrain!

How you can draw the great drama, of the boy killing his mother, and taking her heart from her body to bring it to his love's dog, as she ordered him to do. Her terrible order is expressed in the refrain and the refrain must show this — killing his mother madly, ferociously, *et lonlon laire, lonlon la.* He takes her heart and runs away — running, running with the heart, he falls down with it, *lonlon laire et lonlon la.* It will help you to describe the horror of the situation, the fear the murderer has of being seen, of being taken by the police. It will take you to the fifth verse and the refrain becomes in its simple syllables a terrific expression. He heard his mother's heart speak, and in the sixth verse finally all the interior

thought of the poet is to be expressed by a supernatural voice! The dead heart speaks and says: "Are you hurt, my son?" And the refrain will do the miracle.

Our great Teresa, who created this song, had chosen music different from the music of Gounod, which I sing, because she told me she could not render it as it ought to be.

Well, the truth is, it is not a question of music. It is a difficulty of "realism" which she could not surmount. She had a tremendous and celebrated masculine voice, profound emotional power, but she was extremely limited in her means. I knew her very well. She came each day for one entire year to hear me at the time of my début in Paris, because I was her successor at the Concert Parisien.

I shall give you now the words of the song *La Glu.* The words are written by our famous French poet, Jean Richepin, and set to music by another famous Frenchman, Gounod. I shall show you verse by verse what I mean by amplifying the author's text.

## LA GLU

(Words by Jean Richepin)

1

Y avait une fois un pauv' gas
Et lonlon laire
Et lonlon la
Y avait une fois un pauv' gas
Qui aimait celle qui ne l'aimait pas.

2

Elle lui dit : apporte moi d'main,
Et lonlon laire
Et lonlon la
Elle lui dit : apporte moi d'main
L'cœur de ta mère pour mon chien.

3

Va chez sa mère et la tue,
Et lonlon laire
Et lonlon la
Va chez sa mère et la tue,
Lui prit l'cœur et s'en courut !

4

Comme il courait, il tomba
Et lonlon laire
Et lonlon la
Comme il courait, il tomba
Et par terre le cœur roula.

5

Et pendant que le cœur roulait,
Et lonlon laire
Et lonlon la
Et pendant que cœur roulait,
Entendit l'cœur qui parlait!

6

Et l'cœur disait en pleurant
Et lonlon laire
Et lonlon la
Et l'cœur disait en pleurant:
T'es tu fait mal, mon pauvre enfant?




Now after having given you the words of the song, I shall show you how, by singing the

refrain in different style, you can amplify the text of the author.

In the first verse you give the refrain:

Et lonlon laire
Et lonlon la

with a tender, but sad intonation, indicating the love of the boy and his sadness to see his love unanswered. Perhaps the boy is also sad, feeling that his love is misplaced.

In the second verse you sing the refrain:

Et lonlon laire
Et lonlon la

with a very imperative voice. The girl orders the boy to go and kill his mother. She gives him the order indifferently, dryly, cruelly. Your interpretation of the refrain must indicate it.

In the third verse you see the boy rushing off to fulfill the cruel order of his love. The expression of the refrain must indicate the ferociousness of the deed, the madness of the boy.

The fourth verse tells how the boy after having killed his mother is running back to his sweetheart with his mother's heart.

Your interpretation of the refrain must in-

dicate that he is running fast, as if in fear of being caught; he is breathless, exhausted by the strain, in fact so exhausted that he stumbles while running and drops the heart.

The fifth verse describes how the heart which the boy dropped is rolling in the sand.

This is the climax of the song. Here the refrain must express supreme terror. The voice must be almost extinct, as if the sight of the rolling heart stops your breath.

In the sixth and last verse, the words of which contain the glorification of maternal love, you hear the mother's heart speak. The heart does not complain of the child's cruelty, it does not complain of its own tragic fate, all the mother's heart thinks of is: Has my boy in falling hurt himself?

The refrain should indicate the mother's voice. It is supernatural, plaintive, weeping, hardly perceptible, as if coming from beyond the real world.

I shall give you now the words of another song, to illustrate further how by penetrating into the meaning of the song you can find means to amplify the sense of it.

The original text of the song, which belongs to the eighteenth century, is:

EST-IL DONC BIEN VRAI?

1

Est-il donc bien vrai,
Gentille fillette,
Qu'amour vous ait fait,
Ce soir en cachette,
Présent d'un bouquet?

2

Quand il vous surprit,
Vous étiez seulette;
On dit qu'il vous prit,
Sur ces entrefaites,
Un frisson subit.

3

Dites à présent,
Que vous n'aimiez guère,
Qu'un jeune gallant
Vous fasse, ma chère,
Vous fasse un présent!

The song is spiritual, delicate, it has all the perfume of the eighteenth century, all the gallantry of the court, but the song, if sung as it was originally written, would not go over the footlights, so to say.

If you interpret it by treating it heavily, by exaggerating by low mimic, for example, what the words do not give you opportunity to express, then an ugly vulgarity will appear and art will disappear. But after having

added with wit what in fact was not written in the text but could have been written, you retain the elegance, the perfumed distinction of your text, and you augment to a high degree its value.

I shall give now the text with the "amplifications."

EST-IL DONC BIEN VRAI?

1

Est-il donc bien vrai,
Hum . . . hum!
Gentille fillette,
Hum . . . hum . . . hum . . . hum . . . hum!
Qu'amour vous ait fait,
Hum . . . hum!
Ce soir en cachette,
Hum . . . hum . . . hum . . . hum . . . hum!
Qu'amour vous ait fait
Ce soir en cachette,
Qu'amour vous ait fait . . .
Présent d'un bouquet?

2

Quand il vous surprit . . .
Hum . . . hum!
Vous étiez seulette,
Hum . . . hum . . . hum . . . hum . . . hum!
On dit qu'il vous prit
Hum . . . hum!
Sur ces entrefaites,
Hum . . . hum . . . hum . . . hum . . . hum!
On dit qu'il vous prit,

Sur ces entrefaites,
On dit qu'il vous prit
Un frisson subit !

3

Dites à présent,
Hum . . . hum !
Que vous n'aimez guère,
Hum . . . hum . . . hum . . . hum . . . hum !
Qu'un jeune gallant
Hum . . . hum !
Vous fasse, ma chère,
Hum . . . hum . . . hum . . . hum . . . hum !
Qu'un jeune gallant
Vous fasse, ma chère,
Qu'un jeune gallant
Vous fasse un présent?






You see clearly how the song becomes animated, scenic, and expressive by these hum . . . hums, which are just what is needed in the case to augment, to amplify the otherwise somewhat dry text.

The difficulty sometimes is to find the "correspondence" between the poetry and the amplification — I mean to say, the word or articulation to fit in — which must be absolutely direct and clear.

However, it is only a question of wit, of *esprit*, an indispensable gift for him who wishes to sing a song effectively, a gift without which you can do little.

Now let us improvise such an amplification of text, for instance, in the first verse of an old popular English song you all know: Comin' thro' the Rye.

The first verse reads in plain English:

If a body meet a body
Comin' thro' the rye,
If a body kiss a body
Need a body cry?
Every lassie has a laddie,
Never one have I;
But all the lads
They loved me well,
And what the worse am I?

Now let us sing the first verse with the following modification:

If a body meet a body . . . why not?
Comin' thro' the rye . . . . why not?
If a body kiss a body . . . . why not?
Need a body cry?
Every lassie has a laddie . . why not?
Never one have I . . . . . why not?
But all the lads
They loved me well . . . . why not?
And what the worse am I?

You see all the comic opportunities in the multiple colorations of those "why not's."

You will find easily the amplification of a text, if you are penetrated by the subject of your song. Of course you must not abuse it. Not many songs require an amplification; you must feel when it is needed and permitted.

To conclude the illustration of what we have

called the amplification of text, I shall give you a final example.

I was reading one day one of my favorite authors, Jules Laforgue, and happened to come upon a poem which I thought could be well turned into a song.

The following were the words of the poem, called *Notre petite Compagne,* which you heard me sing under the title: *La Femme.*

NOTRE PETITE COMPAGNE

Si mon air vous dit quelque chose
Vous auriez tort de vous gêner;
Je ne la fais pas à la pose;
Je suis La Femme, on me connaît.

Bandeaux plats ou crinière folle,
Dites? quel front vous rendrait fou?
J'ai l'art de toutes les écoles,
J'ai des âmes pour tous les goûts.

Cueillez la fleur de mes visages,
Buvez ma bouche et non ma voix,
Et n'en cherchez pas davantage . . .
Nul n'y vit clair; pas même moi.

Nos armes ne sont pas égales,
Pour que je vous tende la main,
Vous n'êtes que de naïfs mâles,
Je suis l'Éternel Féminin!

Mon But se perd dans les Étoiles,
C'est moi qui suis la Grande Isis!

Nul ne m'a retroussé mon voile.
Ne songez qu'à mes oasis . . .

Si mon air vous dit quelque chose,
Vous auriez tort de vous gêner;
Je ne la fais pas à la pose:
Je suis La Femme! on me connaît.

When you read attentively this wonderful poem, you will see clearly that the poetic theme is based on the thought expressed in the first four lines. It is the synthesis of the whole poem. In those first four lines the totality of the poem is condensed and, more than that, in them is expressed the mystery of the enigmatic femininity exposed in the poem.

Therefore I made out of these four lines my *leitmotiv*. They became my refrain, which I repeated after each verse. The refrain gave to the text a tremendous opportunity for the amplification of interpretation, amplification of plasticity, amplification of mimicry.

In cases where you choose your songs among poems written without music, you must yourself find the music suitable for your text, or it is really only you who must inspire the composer. You have to feel the rhythm, the color of the musical setting corresponding to each of your songs.

## 3

## HOW TO CREATE ATMOSPHERE

WHAT is meant by the "atmosphere" of a song?

It is not only the frame in which the action is supposed to be placed, because that very often is vague or without importance.

Do not believe it is the costume which creates atmosphere. A few months ago, I heard two singers singing some modern songs, wearing costumes of the Middle Ages. Nevertheless no atmosphere was created, and in honor of the public I must state that it was in no way duped by that costume trick.

What then will create atmosphere? It is style which will help you create atmosphere. The style! The most precious gift of all.

We shall take once more as an example *La Légende de Saint Nicolas.*

I have shown you in the first chapter how the voice is to be treated in accordance with the text of the song. We have learned that colora-

tion of the voice is one means of creating atmosphere.

Now you will see how you can define your atmosphere further by style, by the diverse movements given according to the text. By movement, however, is not meant the rhythm. By movement we mean the different expressions of the plastic.

The principal personage in the song, he who gives it its title, is Saint Nicholas. He has the most theatrical part in the little play; in fact, the song is a little drama treating an episode in the Saint's life.

When we spoke of the coloration of voice, we described St. Nicholas, so to say, vocally and rhythmically.

We must establish now the atmosphere of his personality.

When you sing:

Saint Nicolas alla s'asseoir
Dessus les bords de ce saloir

you have to show by way of plastic movements the great dignity of the Saint. You cannot imagine him hustling around, but you will have him walk majestically, rhythmically, like the supernatural human being he really is.

You create the atmosphere of a song (and I continue to look at each song as a condensed drama) if you give to each of the persons appearing in the song such importance of action as is due to him.

In the example we have before us (*La Légende de St. Nicolas*) we have already indicated by the coloration of voice that, for instance, the butcher is secondary. He is accessory only, a tool to show the miraculous mission of the Saint. Only once does he step out from the background, when he sees himself discovered by the Saint and tries to flee:

Hors de sa porte il s'enfuya . . .

We have tried to indicate by coloration of voice the state of mind of the butcher, frightened to death by the discovery of his crime. We have tried to indicate his flight by prolonging the last note of *enfuyâaaaà!*

It is not a question of throwing out into the audience a high note. The interpreter of the song has to indicate, discreetly but nevertheless plastically, that the butcher is striving to get to the door.

I might mention right here an objection which has been made so many times by critics.

You hear them very often say: "The concert platform is not a stage. We want to hear singing but not to see acting."

If such is the case, it would be sufficient to have singers show the purity, the power, the flexibility or the justness of their voices by singing the scale or performing other vocal acrobatics.

To sing a song is to perform a vocal drama, where the vocal skill is not always of first importance. The interpreter has to create by his interpretative art the atmosphere, that means, he has to create for the listener imaginary scenery, costumes, the different acting personages, — in short he must materialize the text of the song.

You understand of course that it would be impossible to establish binding rules, *commandements* which you could learn by heart and which could teach you how to color your voice (of which we have spoken in a former chapter), or which will teach you how to create an atmosphere (of which this chapter treats).

There is however a principle to build upon. That is the full understanding of the text of the song, its intelligent penetration. The rest is a matter of training, and we train best by varying the example.

Let us therefore consider another song: *Le Voyage de Joseph et Marie à Bethleem.*

## LE VOYAGE DE JOSEPH ET MARIE À BETHLEEM

Nous voici dans la ville où naquit autrefois
Le Roi le plus habile — David, le Roi des Rois.
Allons chère Marie — Près de cet horloger
Est une hôtellerie — Nous y pourrons loger.
Le crieur de nuit: Il est 6 heures.

Mon cher Monsieur, de grâce, n'avez-vous point chez vous
Quelque petite place — quelque chambre pour nous?
Vous perdez votre peine, vous venez un peu tard
Ma maison est trop pleine, allez voir autre part.
Le crieur de nuit: Il est 7 heures.

Passons à l'autre rue, laquelle est vis à vis
Tout devant notre vue, je vois d'autres logis.
Joseph, ton bras, de grâce, je ne puis plus marcher
Je me trouve si lasse. Il faut pourtant chercher.
Le crieur de nuit: Il est 8 heures.

Patron des Trois Couronnes, avez-vous logement
Chez vous, pour deux personnes? Quelque trou seulement?
J'ai noble compagnie dont j'aurai du profit
Je hais le gueuserie — c'est tout dire, il suffit!
Monsieur, je vous en prie, pour l'amour du bon Dieu
Dans votre hôtellerie, que nous ayons un lieu.

Cherchez votre retraite autre part, charpentier,
Ma maison n'est point faite pour des gens de métier.
Le crieur de nuit : Il est 9 heures.

Madame du Cheval Rouge de grâce logez-nous
Dans quelque petit bouge, ou quelque coin chez vous.
Mais je n'ai point de place, je suis couchée sans draps
Ce soir sur la paillasse, sans aucun matelas.
O Madame l'Hôtesse, dit la Vierge à genoux,
Sensible à ma détresse, recevez-nous chez vous.
Excusez ma pensée, je ne la puis cacher.
Êtes trop avancée, trop prête d'accoucher.
Le crieur de nuit : Il est 10 heures.

En attendant madame que j'ai un logement,
Permettez que ma femme se repose un moment.
Très volontiers m'amie, mettez-vous sur le banc
Monsieur, voyez la Pie, ou bien le Cheval Blanc.
Assez causer, bavarde ! cria-t-on dans la nuit
Vas-tu rester de garde, sur la porte à minuit ?
C'est mon mari qui crie ! il faut nous séparer
Bonsoir la compagnie, il faut nous en aller.
Le crieur de nuit : Il est 11 heures.

Dans l'état déplorable où Joseph est réduit
Il découvre une étable malgré la sombre nuit.
C'est la seule retraite qui reste à son espoir
Ainsi que le prophète avait su le prévoir.
(12 coups) Le crieur : Minuit !

Noël ! Noël ! Noël !
Il est né le Divin enfant !
Sonnez hauts bois, résonnez musettes
Il est né le Divin enfant !

Sonnez hauts bois, résonnez longtemps
Depuis plus de quatre mille ans
L'avaient annoncé les prophètes;
Depuis plus de quatre mille ans
Nous attendions cet événement
Il est né le Divin enfant !
Sonnez hauts bois, résonnez musettes
Il est né le Divin enfant !
Sonnez hauts bois, résonnez longtemps !
Noël ! Noël ! Noël !

When I reconstructed this legend in the form given here, I first found myself facing great difficulties. The text in its original version indicated the arrival of Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem. They go from house to house seeking in vain for a shelter. The hour of Mary's delivery — midnight — is approaching. It is night therefore.

Then how create this atmosphere? How show to you and to myself — because I must be impressed myself by the atmosphere, if I wish to impress the listener — how show you that it is night, and how picture the progress of the night, establishing by this progress the final stage of the voyage and the difficulty and the delay in finding a shelter until the last supreme moment.

I added then to the original text of the song

the cry of the night watchman calling out the hours.

I began with: *Il est six heures!* after the first verse, indicating that six long hours will still have to pass, before the Divine Mother will be relieved from her pains. The refrain after the second verse was: *Il est sept heures!* and so on. Sometimes, not to make it too monotonous, the call is heard after two verses.

Naturally the atmosphere will not be created by having the hours shouted out with a round, ample, generous voice, as a classic singer might be tempted to do. The call must come as if from far distance, drawn out, as you hear sometimes in Oriental countries, the call to prayer from a minaret of a mosque.

The original version of my song contained, moreover, no final dramatic climax. It ended with Joseph finding the stable where he could shelter Mary.

The great poetic emotion was lacking, no bright or magnificent color of glory ended the pains of the Divine Mother; there was no triumphant apotheosis.

Neither the coloring of voice nor the creation of atmosphere proved to be sufficient. I had to amplify the original text by adding to it a verse of another legend of the same period, the

Birth of Christ, a refrain full of glorious joy and gratitude:

Noël! Noël! Noël!
Il est né le Divin enfant!
Sonnez hauts bois, résonnez musettes!
Il est né le Divin enfant!
Sonnez hauts bois, résonnez longtemps,
Depuis plus de quatre mille ans
L'avaient annoncé les prophètes;
Depuis plus de quatre mille ans
Nous attendions cet événement,
Il est né le Divin enfant!
Sonnez hauts bois, résonnez musettes
Il est né le Divin enfant!
Sonnez hauts bois, résonnez longtemps!
Noël! Noël! Noël!

Let me now give another example which will illustrate to you that sometimes a theme in the musical air of the song can give you an inspiration, either for an amplification of text, or for creating the atmosphere, or for both at the same time, as in the case of the song: *La Mort de Jean Renaud.*

LA MORT DE JEAN RENAUD

Quand Jean Renaud de guerre revint
Tenant ses boyaux dans ses mains,
Sa mère à la fenêtre en haut
Dit: voici v'nir mon fils Renaud!
Renaud, Renaud, réjouis-toi!
Ta femme est accouchée d'un roi!

Ni de ma femme, ni de mon fils,
Mon cœur ne peut se réjouir.
Je sens la mort qui me transit,
Mère faites dresser un lit !
Mais faites-le dresser si bas
Que ma femme n'entende pas.
Et quand ce fut vers le minuit,
Jean Renaud a rendu l'esprit.
Ah ! Dites-moi mère mamie
Ce que j'entends clouer ici ?
Ma fille c'est le charpentier
Qui raccommode l'escalier.
Ah ! Dites-moi mère mamie
Ce que j'entends chanter ici ?
Ma fille c'est la procession
Qui fait le tour de la maison.
Ah ! Dites-moi mère mamie
Ce que j'entends pleurer ici ?
C'est la voisine d'à côté
Qui a perdu son nouveau né.
Ah ! Dites-moi mère mamie
Pourquoi donc pleurez vous aussi ?
Ma fille ne puis le cacher,
Renaud est mort et enterré.
Ma mère, dites au fossoyeu
Qu'il creuse la fosse pour deux ;
Et que le trou soit assez grand
Pour qu'on y mette aussi l'enfant.
Terre ouvre-toi — terre fends-toi !
Que j'aille rétrouver mon roi !
Terre s'ouvrit — terre se fendit,
Et la belle rendit l'esprit.

Jean Renaud, a knight of the fifteenth century, is returning from war, grievously wounded. His wife, who has just given birth to a child, is in bed; but Renaud's mother keeps looking out for him on the tower of the castle. She sees him approaching, she greets him joyously, not knowing that he is wounded, and announces triumphantly the birth of his child. But Renaud feels that he will die and asks his mother to have him laid far away from his wife's room, that she might not know either his return or his death. He expires a short time after his arrival.

Renaud's wife, however, notices the unusual movements in the house, the strange noises, she hears the hammering, the nailing of the coffin. She hears at last the funeral procession, she questions the mother, who finally has to admit the sad end of Renaud.

You will notice that in each verse the following four measures reappear:



These few measures give a great opportunity to create an atmosphere, to indicate that death has entered the castle.

You lower your voice during the four measures in that particular stanza, you sing with the voice of a chorister, you give the illusion of those few measures being sung by a number of monks in the funeral procession. The illusion becomes complete if you amplify the text by adding to that verse:

Ma fille, c'est la procession
Qui fait le tour de la maison!

the following:

Requiescat in pace!
Requiescat in pace!

sung with the same air.

The same four measures return in each verse, also in the dialogue between the mother and daughter who questions her about what she hears or believes she has heard.

But while the wife of Renaud uses them with a strong voice, intensified by her anxiety to know the truth, the mother's reply is given with an almost extinct voice. She hardly raises her voice, she tries to quiet her down, she remembers her promise given to Renaud to conceal his death.

DAUGHTER

Ah ! dites-moi, ma mère mamie,
Ce que j'entends pleurer ici?

MOTHER

C'est la voisine d'à côté
Qui a perdu son nouveau né!

Before concluding this chapter I wish to return once again to the song by Jules Laforgue, *Notre Petite Compagne,* which we have discussed when speaking of the amplification of the text.

You remember I mentioned that *Notre Petite Compagne* was a poem which I wanted to use as a song. I have explained how I tried to amplify the meaning of the song by using the first verse, which appeared to me the quintessence of the poem, as a refrain after each verse.

It remained to establish the atmosphere of the song.

The words of the poem indicate that the atmosphere in which *Notre Petite Compagne* (it means from the point of view of men "Our little mate") lives, is rather frivolous. We could easily imagine her sitting at a little marble table in one of the Parisian night cafés, smoking a cigarette and listening to the playing of a gipsy band.

You have heard me sing the song, and you understand why, when singing, I smoke a cigarette, and you understand why I have chosen as music for this song the air of a popular waltz, a favorite of cabarets and dancing halls.

I am giving the song half singing, half reciting. You are under the impression that you hear the strains of a gipsy band.

You have not only the atmosphere of the song. You have, I may say, almost the atmosphere of the woman's soul pictured outwardly in every line, in every detail, by her lips keeping the cigarette, by her eyes, by her hands, by her arms . . . provocation . . . sensuality . . . perversity.

## 4

## THE EXPRESSION OF THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF TRAGEDY

It appears to me that there are two forms of tragic expression in dramatic art.

An exterior form and an interior form of expression.

The exterior form of tragic expression is the one you show when you are witness of a tragedy, when you have to describe, to picture to another, a tragic episode.

The interior form of tragic expression is the one you will show, or rather feel, when you are the hero or the victim of a tragic episode, when you are yourself the acting agent of the tragedy.

But why should such a subtle difference be established? Because the human soul is not created to express a tragic episode which befalls a fellow man with the same power of sorrow as one which touches itself. It is an exceptional case when a human being suffers as much from the sorrows of others as from its own sorrows.

You remember that we have spoken in a previous chapter of a song *La Glu*, by Richepin. The song told us of a woman who sent out her lover to kill his mother and to bring his mother's heart to her dog.

However tragically the song may be interpreted, the tragic episode must appear before us as a vision of the interpreter; he will not, because he could not, impress us as if the tragedy he visualizes were his own action.

Now to illustrate the difference in the exterior and interior form of expression of tragedy, I shall discuss with you the interpretation of two songs. Both belong to my old repertoire, though they are modern songs. They treat of two Parisian types, low types of the Paris slums.

I have chosen these two songs because they give me the opportunity, the supreme opportunity, of a tragic episode which could hardly be surpassed in tragic intensity. It is Death! Not the natural death which relieves from illness, not the natural death which concludes peacefully a long life — useful to ourselves or to others. It is violent death, not the sudden death of accident either, but the violent death by the guillotine, the premeditated, sudden, pitiless ending of a strong, youthful life pushed

on the way of crime more by circumstances than by its own wickedness.

The song which illustrates the exterior form of tragedy is *La Pierreuse.*

The word is a typical Parisian expression for a prostitute, the streetwalker. She wears out the stones, *les pierres,* of the sidewalk.

Vice has not wholly annihilated her sentimentality. Her horrible profession has not entirely choked her heart. She is yearning for affection and she finds it in the type of whom our second song — under the title *Ma Tête* — speaks.

This type is what we call in Paris *L'Apache.* He is the protector of *La Pierreuse,* with revolver or knife always ready in his hand. The woman in return for his protection takes care of his material welfare; both are each other's moral help, if one may use such a word, the morality consisting only in an affection which hardly ever goes beyond a physical congeniality.

The songs I have indicated are written in slang. Of course neither *La Pierreuse* nor *L'Apache* speaks the language of the Académie Française. However, you understand [in the third verse of the song *La Pierreuse*] that the girl describes the execution of her lover.

J'l'aperçois là-bas . . . sous la porte . . .
Le curé lui parle sans temois . . .
Sur la bascule, il faut qu'on l'porte . . .
Un camarade l'appelle de loin . . .
Pi, Ouit !

Y n'a pas l'temps de l'dire deux fois,
On l'couche sur la chose en bois !
Tirelitipiton ! Hue donc ! Aie donc !
L'bourreau tire le cordon ;
La tête, le tronc
Tombent dans l'panier de son ;
C'que, ça s'fait vite . . . !
Pi, Ouit !

She sees him stepping out of the prison door, accompanied by the priest who consoles him ; he is not very courageous, he is almost carried to the scaffold. A pal, who is in the crowd, calls out to him to give him courage. In no time his head is put on the block and the knife lowered by the executioner.

In the other song, *Ma Tête,* — sometimes it appeared in my programs under the title *L'Apache* — you will see the same tragic episode, the execution of *L'Apache.* The last verse describes almost in the same words the same situation ; the condemned is awakened by the prison guard, who announces to him that the hour of expiation has arrived. He is

dressed for the execution, he walks out of the prison, approaches the scaffold.

Between his leaving the prison door and his execution seconds only pass, but it is long enough for him to conceive the full vision of his death, of his head cut off rolling into the basket; he has even the vision — perhaps this consoles him — of a respectful crowd saluting bare-headed the man whom Death exonerates.

Et puis voilà . . . j'suis condamné,
Parcequ'il est prouvé qu'j'assassine . . .
Et faut qu'j'attende pale, vanné
L'moment suprème de la guillotine. . . .
Et puis un beau jour on m'dira
C'est pour ce matin ! Faites votr'toilette !
J'sortirai . . . la foule saluera
Ma tête !

Now we have in each song the same poignant, tragic episode, the drama of the guillotine. But in the case of *La Pierreuse* the drama is seen, in the case of *L'Apache* it is lived.

*La Pierreuse* is communicating to us her emotion, but it is the emotion of death she *sees*, it is not the emotion of *L'Apache* who will *experience* death.

*La Pierreuse* will look in deadly fear at her lover marching toward death, but *L'Apache*

will stare with white eyes, almost hypnotized, at the scaffold which is to bring him death.

The one is the exterior, the second is the interior expression of tragedy, which you will also distinguish by the different coloration of voice.

*La Pierreuse* is pretty far away from the real scene of death, her voice becomes shrill, her instinct tells her that her last call: *Pi, Ouit!* to her lover has to overcome space.

I am placing, when singing this *Pi, Ouit,* the voice between the eyes.

In the song *L'Apache* the last words of the condemned man: *J'sortirai,* etc., are uttered with a hoarse voice, almost strangled; the fear of death — it is now almost physical fear — paralyzes his voice, it places his body out of his control.

I place the voice in the throat.

Although the examples I have chosen are rather morbid, I think they are very instructive.

Perhaps I should add that the description of such tragic episodes is not imaginary. The laws in France demand publicity of capital executions. The condemned man cannot be executed within the prison walls. He is led

outside of the prison; the authorities are charitable enough not to prolong his torment. Within a short distance from the prison the scaffold is erected. The crowd — in spite of the early hour, there is a crowd — is kept a great distance from the scaffold.

The Place de la Roquette in Paris was the scene of these tragic episodes, which, by the way, I have never witnessed.

Now do not think my distinction between exterior or interior form of expression of tragedy applies only to lyric interpretation, it applies also to dramatic interpretation. In fact, there is only one interpretation of dramatic art, be it an opera, a tragedy, or a comedy, as there is one technique for an antique tragedy by Euripides, a modern tragedy by Racine or Corneille, or even a simple song.

As I have often repeated, the song is nothing else than a condensed drama.

Its interpretation is as difficult as it is easy.

Difficult because you bear the whole burden of its interpretation, easy because you are independent and unhampered. You are alone on the stage, each spot of it is by your will the center beyond the dispute and beyond the envy of inferior collaborators. You are the only

star, you are your own stage manager, you are sometimes your own librettist and composer, your costumer.

If you are loyal to yourself, you will be your own critic and perhaps the most reliable.

You will be your own property man and you will very judiciously provide for your little play the vital accessories — talent instead of routine, distinction instead of vulgarity, observation which you will train by studying mankind around you, and above all instruction instead of ignorance.

We are unfortunately still far from the ideal standard of dramatic art, to which the doors are widely opened — rightly or wrongly — to every one who wishes to enter with or without vocation for it.

Not the most modest musician, painter, or sculptor will dare knock at the door of his art without carrying with him the baggage of long, laborious preparatory studies; but some young man or woman will decide within twenty-four hours to go on the stage, in spite of a total ignorance of letters and of art, which could afford intellectual nourishment to their power of expression.

For in our days the dramatic artists — at least the great majority of them — the inter-

preters in act and gesture of the thought of men of letters, know little or nothing about literature.

The dramatic artist cannot create without having worked.

He shows to the public his final creation, the result of his work, which ought to be based on intellectuality, solidly founded on knowledge.

Without knowing you cannot be intellectual. There is no real Art without intellectuality. You are more artistic when you combine sensibility with your intellectuality. Your sensibility will inspire you to beautify your creation.

It is true that the dramatic artist's mission is to present human truth; however, he has not to give mechanically and faithfully an imitation of life. He must in his art only reflect the human truth.

In presenting the ugly he must show us a ray of beauty, in presenting despair a beam of hope. Show how the cruel assassin goes to the scaffold to expiate his crime, but let him in his last second be rehabilitated before God and men.

The dramatic artist shall not be a photographer, but a painter. His art shall have all arts for its servants and his inspiration shall come from nature, color, from harmonious sound, from marble.

## 5

## THE COMIC SPIRIT

### THE EXPRESSION OF JOY AS CHARACTERIZED IN COLORS — GRAY, PURPLE, AND RED

EVERY human being possesses a certain amount of sensitiveness, therefore even an average artist may be able to interpret adequately a tragic song or a tragic dramatic action.

However, to be able to impregnate oneself with comic spirit requires a natural gift. You cannot study how to acquire a gift from nature, you will lose your precious time. You have it or you have it not.

This gift of nature goes generally with another gift, that of health. You do not see a sick person imbued with a sense of comedy.

Nature has given it not only to the healthy body but also to the healthy mind. You will find that a character of equable disposition is capable of a gayety which is refused to a capricious or nervous character.

The comic spirit is sometimes even a national gift. The Latin race possesses a greater sense of humor than the Anglo-Saxon.

It might be that the comic capacity — if I may use this word — of a race is also dependent on his geographical situation.

The gayety of spirit is surely more developed in radiant Italy than in the Scandinavian mists.

The *esprit* of France, which is in fact the *humor* of French intellect, is so essentially French and unique, that the word has remained French and in this sense untranslatable.

May-be that the French sun, which is in southern France of tropical character, ripens our wine, and at the same time our sense of humor, which would not prosper in an atmosphere of ice-water and ginger ale.

The lack of humor of the Briton is proverbial.

I do not know whether you have ever heard of a famous French journalist and polemist, Henri Rochefort, known by his *esprit* and caustic wit.

He thought he could not pay me a higher compliment than by dedicating to me the following words:

*Gloire à Yvette Guilbert. Elle a trouvé moyen de faire rire les Anglais.*

(Translation: Glory for Yvette Guilbert. She succeeded in making the English laugh.)

If, therefore, I have to give you directions or indications in regard to expression of Comic Spirit, I have to presume that you are genuine possessors of this gift of nature.

You will of course realize at once that the gayety and the humor, which prevail in you, have different weights, determined by a natural measure, created by nature itself . . . the laugh!

Not *your* laugh, but the laugh you produce.

There is humor which produces a smile, humor which produces a big laugh, humor which produces a roaring, almost hysterical laugh.

That I might be able to illustrate by examples the different shades of Comic Spirit, I have chosen for each shade a different color — Gray, Red, Purple, and Vermillion.

Now if I speak of Gray in reference to an expression of Comic Spirit, I do not wish to indicate that the expression is monotonous.

The neutral color indicates the distinction of the humor, a quiet and refined gayety. It is to produce what we call so elegantly in French: *Le sourire du coin de la lèvre.* A

smile on the borders of your lips, as you might say.

The song *La Défense Inutile* will illustrate what I have just explained.

LA DÉFENSE INUTILE

(Rondeau, XVIII[e] siècle)

Toutes ces mères,
Toujours sévères
A leurs fillettes défendent d'aimer.
Vaine défense,
Quand, dès l'enfance,
D'un feu brûlant on se sent enflammer;
On sent déjà malgré son innocence,
On sent déjà
Qu'on est faite pour ça.

Lorsqu'on arrange
Coiffure Fontange,
Prend-on pour soi toutes ces peines-là?
On nous admire,
L'on nous fait sourire,
Qui cherche à plaire
Bientôt aimera;
On sent déjà que le cœur vous inspire,
On sent déjà qu'on est faite pour ça.

Quand on peint la flamme
Dont brûle notre âme,
On tremble, on rougit,
On a l'air interdit.

Jusqu'à la pudeur,
Tout trahit un cœur,
Rougit-on, hélas !
De ce qu'on entend pas ?
On devient tendre,
Peut-on se défendre,
On sent déjà qu'on est faite pour ça.

On voit un amant,
Mais timidement,
On baisse les yeux
Pour le regarder mieux.
D'où vient ce désir ?
D'où vient qu'un soupir
Presse l'estomac,
Que le cœur fait tic-tac ?
L'amant nous presse,
Sa peine intéresse,
On sent déjà qu'on est faite pour ça.

La bonne amie
Est moins chérie
Que cet amant
Qu'on n'a vu qu'un moment.

Quand il sait plaire
Il devient téméraire,
Et l'on excuse l'audace qu'il a.
Et puis notre trouble
Redouble,
Et puis on aime,
Et tout finit par là.
On sent déjà malgré son innocence,
On sent déjà qu'on est faite pour ça.

The second color we have chosen for our expressions of Comic Spirit is Red. The comic spirit which produces a big, hearty laugh and which I consider the limit of good taste in comedy.

Of course, just as we have farces on the stage, so we have farcical songs. We must avoid an exaggerated interpretation, drifting into vulgarity, avoid the slap-stick of the clown, but all the same give to the joyous Red all its brightness and not dilute the color with water.

To illustrate the red color, I have chosen a song the title of which is *Que l'amour cause de peine!* It is a farcical peasant song.

A peasant boy, rather silly, tells how he puts on his Sunday dress to make a visit to his sweetheart, and is knocking at her door; but at the very moment he is going to step into the door, he slips and falls in the mud. When he gets up and approaches his sweetheart, her mother ridicules him in such a manner that he runs off quite ashamed and quite aware of his silliness.

The song contains no powerful comic action, it is entirely a matter of interpreting the type of a silly boy, a type you find among Molière's famous valets.

As you will see, there is a refrain to each verse in the song. This refrain you have to express in the mood of each verse.

In the first refrain you have to indicate a naïve, self-satisfied vanity. The boy has put on, as he says, his best shirt and his big hat. *Je suis un gars comme il faut!*

In the second refrain you make him lose his countenance a little; he knocks at his sweetheart's door, but she rather hesitates to open.

Then his accident happens, he slips on the wet pavement. Here, in the refrain, he is whining almost like a child. He is getting up again, not without difficulty. He recovers his courage and embraces his sweetheart; he is not triumphant, but rather awkward, — you hear it in the refrain of this verse. He is content again to have found the way back to his sweetheart, he is grinning; but the rough voice of his girl's mother throws him back into helplessness. She calls him logger-head, tells him that her daughter is not created to "wipe his snout"! He feels ashamed, dazzled, he creeps away, almost like a beaten dog. His last refrain is confused, stammering.

## QUE L'AMOUR CAUSE DE PEINE!

L'autr'jour me prit envie
D'aller voir mon Ysabeau, (bis)
Je pris ma belle chemise
Et mon grand joli chapeau.

*Refrain:*

Ah! que l'amour cause de peine,
Ah! que l'amour cause de maux!

Je pris ma belle chemise
Et mon grand joli chapeau, (bis)
— Belle, belle ouvre ta porte;
Je suis un gars comme il faut!

*Refrain:*

Ah! que l'amour, etc.

— Belle, belle ouvre ta porte;
Je suis un gars comme il faut, (bis)
Mais la place était mouillée,
Je glissis et j'fis un saut!

*Refrain:*

Ah! que l'amour, etc.

Mais la place était mouillée,
Je glissis et j'fis un saut, (bis)
Quand j'fus rel'vé, à grand peine
J'embrassis mon Ysabeau.

*Refrain:*

Ah! que l'amour cause de peine,
Ah! que l'amour cause de maux!




Quand j'fus relevé à grand peine
J'embrassis mon Ysabeau (bis)
Mais sa mère était derrière
Qui me dit: "Vilain lourdaud!"

*Refrain:*

Ah! que l'amour, etc.

Mais sa mère était derrière
Qui me dit: "Vilain lourdaud!" (bis)
"Croué-tu que ma fille est faite
Pour te torcher le museau?"

*Refrain:*

Ah ! que l'amour, etc.

"Croué-tu que ma fille est faite
Pour te torcher le museau?" (bis)
Ma foué, je m'sentis l'air bête
Que j'partis comme un nigaud.

*Refrain:*

Ah ! que l'amour, etc.

There remains now to illustrate the expression of comic spirit which I have qualified as Purple.

I am choosing as an example a song called *L'Hôtel du No. 3.* It is a modern song, a song of the Parisian Latin Quarter; it is a student's song. The comedy of the song is not based on any comic action nor on any comic accent. I used to call these songs *Chansons immobiles,* no gesture, hardly any coloration of the voice indicate the comedy. Their humor is in their words, their meaning, if you wish, in their double-meaning even.

The listener of the song shall not hear but see the raillery in your eyes; you will accentuate purposely the lack of accent in your voice. The interpreter has to appear, as we say in French, as a *pince-sans-rire,* a *comique-à-froid*

(I do not know an adequate translation; the nearest might be a "sly one" a "cold-storage comic.")

## L'HÔTEL DU NO. 3

(Chanson de Xanrof)

J'habite près de l'école de médecine,
Au premier, tout comme un bourgeois;
Une demeure magnifique, divine,
A l'hôtel du No. 3!

Il y a, pour que tous aient leurs aises,
Des lits de fer et des lits en bois,
Et de toutes sortes de punaises
A l'hôtel du No. 3!

Les draps sont grands comme des serviettes,
Il n'y a qu'un seul modèle je crois;
Et c'est le chien qui lave les assiettes
A l'hôtel du No. 3!

Une grande fraternité règne;
Les voisins y sont très courtois,
Et nous avons tous le même peigne
A l'hôtel du No. 3!

On y fait parfaitement vot'chambre,
On la balaie même . . . quelque fois,
Mais ça n'sent, ni le lubin ni l'ambre
A l'hôtel du No. 3!

Notre potage roule dans ses vagues,
Tant de cheveux, que chaque mois
Les clients s'en font faire des bagues
A l'hôtel du No. 3!

La bonne n'est pas une très belle fille,
Mais nous n'tenons pas au minois,
On lui fait la cour en famille
A l'hôtel du No. 3 !

You remember that I have spoken of four colors by which I have indicated the shades of comic expression — Gray, Red, Purple, and Vermillion.

I have not given an example of Vermillion, because I cannot illustrate the comic spirit corresponding to the last named color.

Nothing in the literature of French songs, even of the most remote period, offers an occasion of utilizing an expression of comedy, which I would call the coarse "comedy of grimaces" — grimaces of face, as well as grimaces of voice.

The words of songs, which we know, show not a trace of the utility even of such grimaces. These grimaces were introduced in France during the seventeenth century by the Italian jesters, headed by Scaramouche, who exhibited their low comedy on the *Pont Neuf* in Paris.

Their comedy consisted mainly in distorting their faces, which made their public, a crowd of servants, soldiers, chair-carriers, bar-keepers, and street-loiterers of both sexes, roar with laughter.

We have on our modern stage descendants of these low comedians, but their antics can hardly be considered as art, even of a lower degree. They are useless and auxiliary only to impoverished artists, who are unable to provoke a laugh in another way.

To resume! I repeat that I have no intention of establishing a theory of expression of the comic spirit.

I have said the sense of humor is a natural gift and an artist will be able to sing a comic song or play a comedy or a farce only according to his own sense of humor.

We have in our French literature gems of human comedy in the works of Molière. Have they been played or are they played as they should be? I hardly think so.

Venerable dramatic artists, possibly without any sense of humor or with a limited sense of humor, have built up a tradition how to play Molière. We all know that tradition is a strait-jacket put on every artistic temperament. Other artists, familiar with the history of literature, who have read that Molière was an actor of the streets and that he took lessons from Scaramouche how to make funny faces, how to move his chin, how to lift his eyes, how to move his wig by a muscular effort of his

forehead or of his ears, how to paint his mouth larger . . . concluded that his comedies should be played as low farces. But while Molière was in verity a delicate satirist and brilliant writer, he was a decidedly bad actor.

And probably none of us has seen or will see Molière properly presented, as it is humanly impossible to assemble a company of players, each of them in possession of that divine gift of nature, a sense of humor.

## 6

## THE PLASTIC ART

If you appear on a platform or on a stage to play in a drama, or to sing in opera, or to sing a simple song, there must be an absolute harmony between the expression of your art, be it acting or singing, and your body.

I shall go further and say that even before you have the opportunity of expressing your art, your physical appearance must prepare the public that it will experience perfect art — that it will not be shocked by a discord between the art and the exterior of the artist.

It is a well-known fact that while each individual of a large audience might be personally more or less receptive, more or less indifferent, the ensemble of an audience is nevertheless most sensitive. A crowd is easier moved to tears, or to laughter especially, than the individual.

Can you imagine a singer, for instance, stepping on the platform, racing up hurriedly towards the public with long steps and swing-

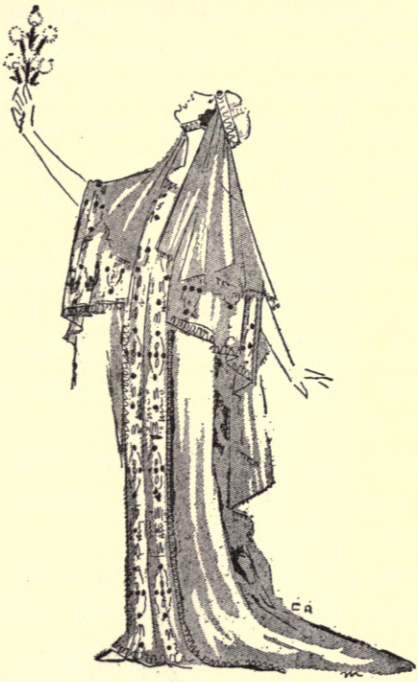
ing arms, as if he tried to catch a train? Can you imagine with what hilarity the audience will receive the artist? It might be the greatest artist, he or she will appear grotesque



and the most eminent talent will not save the artist from ridicule.

The artist must be able to carry himself on the stage gracefully, his attitude must be of noble simplicity, not pompous nor ostentatious.

If you have once established your personality from the plastic point of view, you will go further and mold your body each time in



harmonious accordance with the text of your songs.

I do not think that I am pronouncing any startling principles by saying that you cannot sing the legend of a Saint with the same plastic attitude as you would sing a Bergerette of the

eighteenth century. You cannot sing the song of a Cowboy with the same plastic attitude as you would sing a Soldier's song, and so on.

Even if you have no experience at all, instinct will keep you from doing it. You see therefore that the interpretative artist, however limited his knowledge may be, however limited his talent may be, feels vaguely, but instinctively, that the foundation of his art is the plastic quality of his body.

We shall see in the course of this chapter how vast and how deep this foundation is, and we shall find that the plasticity of the body is foundation and at the same time principal structure of the dramatic art.

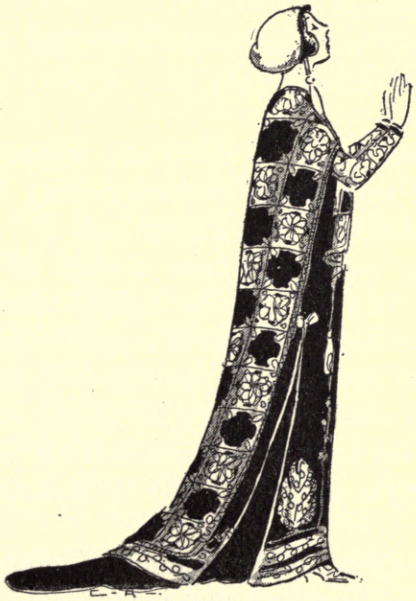
Can you express tragic words with an attitude of comedy, or could you express comedy in a tragic attitude?

Can you interpret a love song in an attitude of violence, or words of passion with folded arms?

Can you sing a song which is a prayer with outstretched arms or sing a warrior's song on your knees? No! No!

You see for yourself the dramatic artist must be a sculptor who gives to his body the attitude which the words, the thought of his song require.

But let the dramatic artist be always a sculptor of beauty! If you are not gifted enough by instinct to embody plastic beauty, you must learn it just as conscientiously as you learn the technique of your art.



How can you acquire experience in plastic beauty? By the education of your eyes. By contemplation of sculptures and paintings. I say by *contemplation* of these works of art, not merely by looking at them.

Do not think that the costume, however

beautiful or typical it may be, can hide your lack of plastic beauty. Your dress may be as ample as you can make it, but if your legs are clumsily posed, the attitude of your body will be ungraceful in spite of the magnificence of your costume.

It is not sufficient to have the face only, but one must have also the body of what one sings or plays.

Isadora Duncan, plastically speaking, is a sublime tragedienne or comedienne; Madame Sarah Bernhardt was a great dancer.

In my youth and later through all my life I have been not only an ardent admirer, but an enthusiastic observer of sculpture and painting, and I am sure that this education has helped me very much to develop my plastic sense and to cast my body almost instinctively according to the style, the period, and the meaning of my song.

Just as you must be mentally or intellectually, you must be plastically, impregnated by your song; then your creation will appear instinctive instead of studied. Your art will become your nature because your nature is art.

Now I will give you one after another a few examples of my songs to illustrate the important rôle which the plastic part plays

in the interpretation of a song, and which in all probability you hardly realize, as it is hidden below the costume or the ample stage dress.

Miss Myra Wilcoxon, a young dancer and pupil in my class of pantomime, will graciously lend me her flexible anatomy to embody the plastic movements or attitudes corresponding to the text. (See note below.)

Study them, be inspired by them, reproduce them in your imagination so often that you will be able to reproduce any attitude or any movement bodily.

If you are gifted by nature with a harmonious body, your task of sculptor will be very easy.

In the beginning of these lectures I have compared the dramatic artist or the singer of a song, who has to color his words, to give them light and shade, with a painter. It is quite logical that he must be also a sculptor.

What a powerful sculptor must be the dramatic artist who plays a pantomime!

The French stage knew a mime, Debureau, who was celebrated for the harmonious yet

NOTE: At the public lectures Miss Myra Wilcoxon exhibited all the plastic movements and attitudes the illustrations of which appear in this book.

expressive movements of his body, legs, arms, and hands, more than by the movements of his face.

Each song or each play is a pantomime with words. Some of the words may replace a movement, but the spirit, the thought, remains to be expressed by the plastic attitude of the body.

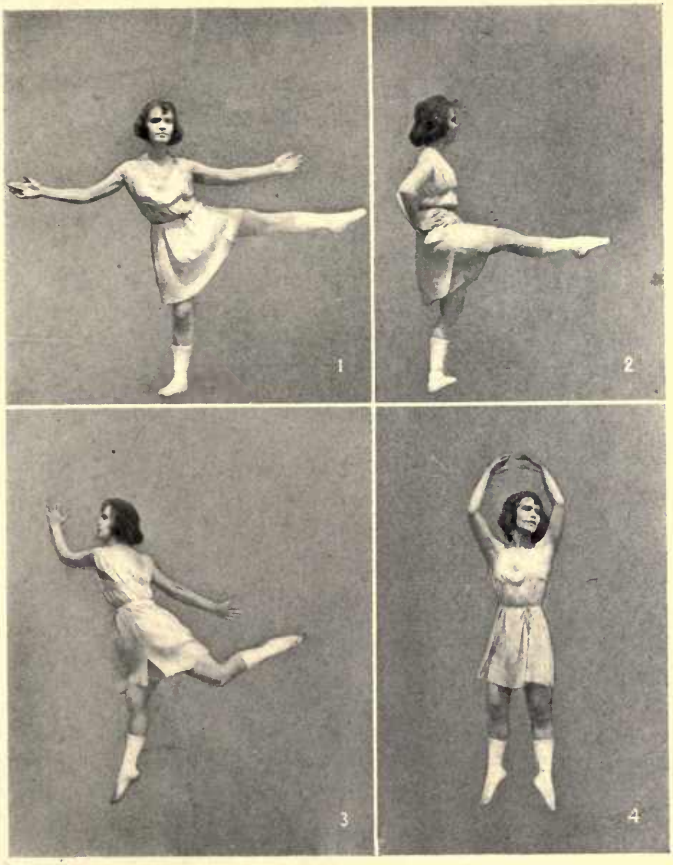
We have had in our great tragedian Mounet-Sully a sublime incarnation of plastic art on the stage. His walk, his movements were a lesson for each student of dramatic art. He danced tragedy, as the Greek called their playing of tragedy.

To see him play Œdipus was a revelation of the plastic dance. Even though dressed in a long tunic, the plastic expression of his body, hidden under the costume, was plainly visible, perhaps not materially visible, but all the same visible to everybody.

It is, of course, understood that to give to your body elasticity and flexibility you will have to make preliminary gymnastics.

The following four illustrations represent a group of movements which are to be studied. On them depend the poise of limbs, the harmony and stability of the body. (1 · 2 · 3 · 4)

The fifth illustration shows you an attitude


1
2
3
4

which, I am sure, you will never employ when singing a song or playing a part (5). Nevertheless, the practice of these movements, which belong rather to the realm of acrobatics, was necessary for Miss Wilcoxon in order to give a pantomimic representation of a juggler of the twelfth century, of which you will find illustrations in the following pages.

The two elements, plasticity and recitation, are so united, so inseparable, that plasticity needs words to complete it, and words need plasticity for its more perfect expression. I would like to take recitation in the widest sense of its meaning — recitation by word, by song, by dance — dance being the rhythmic plastic expression of a musical theme, which again is the expression of a thought by sound.

Really one cannot emphatically enough insist on the intimate relation between the plastic element and recitation, whether it be by the spoken word, by music, or by dance. You set a thought and the words which express it to music, and you translate the music back to thoughts and words ; you translate a thought into music and you embody the music by the plastic movements or attitudes of your body.

Suppose the poem of Stéphane Mallarmé, on which Claude Debussy founded his famous

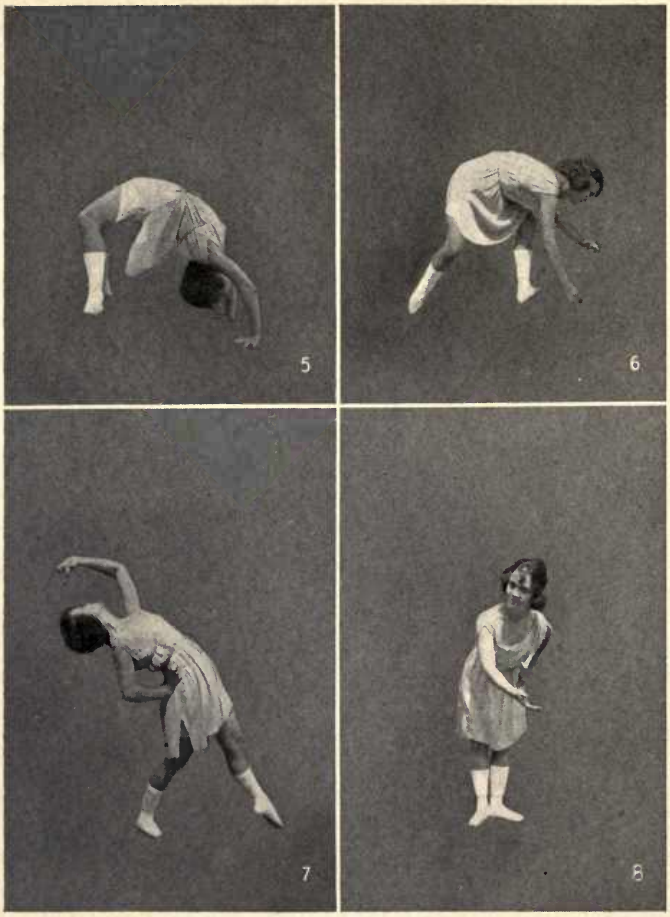
Symphonic Poem, *L'Aprèsmidi d'un Faune*, had not existed; do you not think that a poet, hearing this characteristic music, would be inspired to write the very same poem? And we have seen a famous dancer, Nijinski, translating poem and music into the realm of the plastic.

It becomes almost commonplace to repeat again that the interpretative artist is most decidedly inferior, incomplete, if he does not unite in his art all the arts.

I was therefore in no way astonished nor embarrassed when Miss Wilcoxon, who was a dancer, came to ask me, the singer, for instruction in the plastic. It was a question of establishing a link between my art and her physical technique, which was quickly found. Miss Wilcoxon danced music, she expressed it by undetermined poses; I then taught her to translate music into thought, thought into words, and to translate both, thoughts and words, into plastic movements and attitudes. She became a mime.

Now let us illustrate some plastic movements.

Sometimes you find on my programs a song called *Ma Cousinette*. There is one verse in the song which reads as follows:


5
6
7
8

Sans recherche pour la toilette,
Elle va dans son jardinet,
Où chaque fleur sous l'herbette
Lui présente un bouquet.

The song belongs to the group of *Chansons à danser*. The verse I have quoted reappears different times as a refrain. Its meaning is: the girl, of whom the song speaks, goes to the garden picking flowers for her lover. The song being a *Chanson à danser*, that means a song where you have to indicate some rhythmic movements, you will almost instinctively picture the movement of picking flowers. You can pick flowers in daily life in a variety of manners; but I do not think that in a song, where the movement reappears twice or three times with the refrain, you could bend over your body and pretend to pick flowers in the careless way you might do in daily life. The movement must appear in plastic beauty.

The following illustration shows you Miss Wilcoxon in the position of picking flowers. Note in the illustration the pose of feet and the way the knees are bent. The attitude is most graceful and shows flexibility (6).

It is left to your imagination to see Miss Wilcoxon dressed in my costume, singing my song *Ma Cousinette*.

You might consider it perhaps an exaggeration or a pedantry to ask a singer to practice gymnastics for her appearance on the stage. But believe me, your audience will appreciate the difference between your gesture of picking flowers in plastic beauty and the gesture of a peasant woman digging out her potatoes.

I would like to illustrate another plastic attitude in another song which we will discuss later, *Le Cycle du Vin*. You remember in one verse I indicate that the glass containing the wine is brought to the mouth and that I am drinking the wine.

De verre en bouche
La voilà la jolie bouche
Bouchi, bouchons, bouchons le vin
La voilà, la jolie bouche au vin.

The following is an illustration of the attitude of the body when singing this verse (7). You see the strong, almost straight line from the chin to the toe of the outstretched foot, while the hand on the hip supports the weight of the body. This song is almost a continuous pantomime, a march, incessant and varied, a march to be danced.

The plastic attitude of the body is most harmonious and impresses you as beautiful.

You do not imagine that the same effect would be produced by simply throwing back the head and making a gesture as if snatching a drink.

The two following illustrations refer to another song which you know already, *La Légende de St. Nicolas*, and particularly to the words with which the butcher invites the little children to enter his house where later he kills them.

> Entrez, entrez, petits enfants,
> Y a d'la place assurément.

The first is taken to show especially the wrong attitude of the body. Compare them and you yourself will find the difference. The limbs and feet are too near each other, the gesture of the arm too narrow, too small (8).

The second illustration shows the right attitude of the body. The plasticity is broad, the gesture of the arm is large, it means "welcome." You see how the costume will be draped around the long line formed by the leg (9).

I will terminate these illustrations by a reference to the song *Le Voyage de Joseph et Marie à Bethleem*, the words of which I gave in the second of my lectures.

The three following illustrations show three

different characteristic attitudes which occur in the song.

The first one refers to the moment where Joseph, looking for a shelter, notices in the distance a house. You see in the picture the long line from the head to the point of the outstretched foot and another line from the chin to the end of the other foot. This is, so to say, the plastic structure around which the ample costumes are draped and by which you will obtain an impressive picture (10).

The second illustration shows Joseph beseeching the innkeeper to give them shelter (11).

Monsieur, je vous en prie, pour l'amour du bon Dieu,
Dans votre hôtellerie, que nous ayons un lieu.

The third illustration shows another attitude of supplication, but this time it is Mary who implores the hostess of another inn to offer her shelter (12).

O Madame l'Hôtesse, dit la Vierge à genoux,
Sensible à ma détresse, recevez-nous chez vous.

The words indicate that Mary has knelt down when addressing the hostess.

The illustration shows you, however, that the interpreter must only indicate the movement of kneeling, as his body must immediately


9


10


11


12

return to a normal upright position, when he subsequently has to impersonate the hostess who rebuffs Mary rather haughtily, rather disdainfully, as if embarrassed to shelter a woman whose coming maternity might disturb the peace of the house.

You see how ignorant an interpreter would be if he completed the movement of kneeling down, instead of indicating it plastically only. Can you see the grotesque situation of one getting up awkwardly from his knees and trying to continue the song? Could you imagine a more dismal destruction of rhythm, atmosphere, color, and plasticity?

All these efforts to acquire plastic beauty tend to give to the artist of the stage, or of the concert platform, a prominence in appearance, to broaden, to enlarge his outlines. I can better explain what I mean by referring to a French expression. We say, *avoir de la ligne* (to get the right lines).

Any actress, even without a pretty face, will be able to play the rôles of grand heroines, *si elle a de la ligne*, if she has portliness, stateliness, in short, all the prestige of plastic beauty.

However important the plastic harmony may be, it is understood that you will not sacrifice the truth of a subject to the plastic command-

ments, and that you must be able to deform your plastic beauty for the sake of art. I shall give you an example.



You know that sculpture in the Middle Ages took its inspiration sometimes for the ornamentation of architectural works from the



13



14



15



16

jugglers, buffoons who passed through the cities, danced, sang on public streets, and tried to make people laugh by their distortion of face and body. Many of the gargoyles of famous cathedrals were suggested to the sculptors of the Middle Ages by these buffoons.

I had among my manuscripts a piece of music dating from the thirteenth century, probably the dance of some buffoon. It was called *Estampeda de Jongleurs.*

I reconstructed for Miss Wilcoxon this curious dance, where the grotesque rhythm and the exaggerated mimicry illustrate the character of the personage even more intensely than the costume, which was a necessary accessory on account of the movements.

The following are reproductions of a few phases of this juggler dance of the thirteenth century.

As you see, it requires quite an artistic courage to present oneself in public under such a grotesque appearance, but fortunately there are artistic souls who see art in the expression of every curious and rare form (13 · 14 · 15 · 16).

I think in speaking of the plastic art on the stage or platform, I should not omit discussion of one thing to which, in my opinion, much too little importance is attached. I mean the

question of costumes. I know I shall be told the concert platform is not a stage and the concert singer has not to disguise himself, but, of course, this is a commonplace and bad taste.



Art has to sacrifice to art only, and no other consideration should enter into the mind of an artist. He should not say: "What is the use? The public comes (or stays away) anyhow." Every artist has to strive for a complete creation. The painter or sculptor will not



leave a particle of his work unfinished or sketchy. The painter even provides for his painting an adequate frame.

One cannot tell me that there are mechanical



difficulties. I have traveled twenty-one years through the whole world from San Francisco in the west to Smyrna in the farthest east, from Stockholm in the north to Cairo in the south. I have appeared on stages, but also in the most important concert halls. Everywhere I found,

or could arrange, a dressing room in which I could put on or change a costume.

I have seen on the concert platform exhibitions of bad taste which made me suffer, not so much for the artist' or for art' sake as for the public' sake, to whom I think the most complete art should be offered, not as a return for his money but for his education, of which art and artists benefit more than they imagine. I have seen a very famous singer (quite aged) in an attire which she considered probably of a simple elegance. Simple it was. But simplicity does not create atmosphere. She looked like a cook in her Sunday dress.

I have seen on the concert platform another singer, a very charming young woman, dressed in a tea-gown of the latest, most absurd style. The skirt ended just below the knees. Certainly it was the latest style, but is it good taste? Does such style create an artistic atmosphere?

There are other artists who, if they choose a costume, do so rather for the sake of a disguise, than for the sake of creating an atmosphere in accordance with their song.

I have seen on the program of a singer a poem of Victor Hugo's, announced as a song of the fifteenth century and sung in a costume



of the fifteenth century. I have seen singers interpreting the *Bergerettes* of Weckerlin in costumes of the Middle Ages. I have even seen one of the most famous opera singers of our time appear as Messalina in a spangled dress.

I am sure that each of these singers to whom I have just referred would answer me: "But we make money! We are popular! We have success!" But why not make money, be popular, have success, and, at the same time, accustom the public to the most complete expression of art?

I am speaking here of women only. The male singer is, I think, forever condemned to appear in this modern abomination called evening dress, until one sensible, tasteful, and courageous man will break the rule and appear in some appropriate costume. The priest dons a robe for his religious service, the judge dresses in a toga to pronounce justice. Why should Art be delivered in the detestable banality of a frock-coat and patent leather shoes?

There is no department in dramatic art where more horrible crimes are committed than in the costume department. In my memory will ever live the most extraordinarily costumed Cleopatra of a very popular

moving picture play, which I have seen in this country.

No dramatic artist should confine himself to learning by heart his part or his song, and leave



the rest to the stage director or to accident, which is sometimes even more reliable.

An hour or two in any library will inform you about the costumes of each period and the way they were born. You will know that a woman wearing the costume of the thirteenth



century will not make the same bow as Madame de Pompadour, or that Madame du Barry will not cross the stage as a lady of our time would cross Fifth Avenue. An hour or two in the library will inform any artist of the male sex,



not only of the difference between a three-cornered hat of the time of Louis XV and a large-brimmed hat with long feathers of the time of Molière, but will inform him that he cannot remove the one or the other as he takes off his straw hat on the beach.

Every gesture corresponding to the text must also be adapted to the period of the costume.

But your rôle must not be that of a tailor's dummy dressed in the costumes. Just as you



AU LUXEMBOURG JE FIS SA CONNAISSANCE . . .
(Song epoch 1860, Les Hussards de la Garde)

have to animate your words, color them, accentuate them, just as you have to give light and shade to your voice, so you have to animate your costumes. You must know, guess how and when you can produce with the



chiffons of your costume, by a movement of the arm, of the hand, by a twist of the body or the head, a beautiful drapery. You must be the master of your costume — show that you carry it, if the material is heavy, but let it "rain" around your body when it is light.

## 7

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FACULTY OF OBSERVATION

WHAT is observation?

Observation is the faculty of seeing men and things quickly and justly.

If you observe a lifeless thing, you must see its outlines, judge its dimensions, recognize its peculiarities, conceive its beauties or its ugliness.

If you observe men, you must, when you see them, be able at the same time to penetrate them, be able to judge their interior from exterior, recognize their character by their peculiarities. The observer will comprehend the causes and effects of an action, he will even recognize the inspiration of such an action.

The faculty of observation is a vital quality for almost everybody who has a useful occupation.

The gift of observation creates invention; invention being utilization of experience, which itself is accumulation of observations.

The gift of observation is a vital quality for any kind of artist, it is a *conditio sine qua non* for the dramatic artist, be he singer or actor.

Your observation can be mechanical, or your observation can be analytical. Mechanical observation will lead you to imitation only.

An imitative art is no art, but artificiality.

If you imitate even the greatest artist, your imitation will remain artificiality, you will not stir your public, you will neither provoke its laugh nor its tears. You will leave it cold.

If, however, your observation is analytical, you will not imitate your model, you will revive it. You will augment it, you will amplify its peculiarities, inspired by the findings of your observation.

The inventive power of an artist is Imagination.

Aided by your imagination you will put into life all human types you have observed.

You will collect their hypocrisies and their frankness; their truth and their falsehood; their thousand tricks of attack and defense. You will look into their loyalty, but also behind the astonishing masks they put on or take off their faces, according to their desire to deceive you or to be faithful to you.

You will see how their eyes and their lips

correspond to their emotions, their vices, their virtues.

However, you have not only to see.

The observer must be photographer and negative plate in one, he must be a spectator of humanity and at the same time its critic and its judge.

The observer lives in perpetual emotion, he is in turn amused or bored, enthusiastic or discouraged, impassioned or disgusted, but he is always knowing. His eye is a pencil which marks down, on the pages of his brain, indelible lines, which, added one to one, create for the observer most valuable documents of humanity.

By such documents you, the conscientious observer, will complete your incarnations of those characters, which the words of the author, the playwright, or the poet have sketched for you.

Can the gift of observation be acquired?

Certainly!

Observation is a matter of education, of training.

If a child be taught from his earliest youth to open his eyes and to keep them open, to walk through life not only with open eyes but

attentive eyes, he cannot help becoming an observer.

It is said that a seaman, who is eternally on the lookout for the dangers of the sea, becomes very sharpsighted. Why should one not acquire a sharp vision of men and things by continually "eying" them?

I wish to illustrate what I mean by training the gift of observation, and mention an experience I have had with many of my pupils.

Sometimes I practice with them, how they should comport themselves on the stage, when placed in certain situations of daily life.

I imagine for them certain situations, — tragic, comic, or indifferent situations, significant or quite banal situations, — and I try to find out in what measure they possess the gift of observation, and what is the quantity and quality of their observations.

You will hear with surprise that very few were able to express exteriorly an imaginary joy or sorrow; many were more or less embarrassed when they were to read an imaginary letter, instead of holding the real letter in their hands. Many were at a loss when they had to indicate by the intonations of their voice the character of the imaginary letter, whether it

was a business letter, some indifferent letter, or a love letter.

There were some who were unable to imitate putting on a pair of gloves without having the real gloves in their hands.

All my pupils had seen me when I was singing the song *Le lien serré*, pretending to sew. They had seen how I pulled an imaginary needle out of my bodice, how I broke the thread, how I tied a knot, how I moistened the other end of my thread to file it into my needle, how I played the "virtuoso of observation" by insisting on the difficulty of filing the thread into the needle owing to bad sight, how I accentuated the bad sight by lifting my eyebrows, how I frowned and knit my brows.

When I asked some of my pupils to do this imaginary sewing, none of them could realize this gesture without a real needle and thread. None of them — and all certainly know how to sew — could even indicate the rôle which each hand plays in sewing. None of them had apparently observed their own fingers, they were ignorant of the life of their hands.

How then could one ever be able to incarnate human life with its thousand subtle shades!

If I have tried to show that observation is a vital quality for the dramatic artist, I would



Le Lien Serré

nevertheless not like to give the impression that I consider the observations recorded as a kind of costume-collection kept in the wardrobe of your brain, which you will take out as necessity requires, and in which you will clothe your characters.

You would then really not incarnate a character, you would produce only an illusion of a character. Your observations must be based on intellectuality, on cerebration. You must double the observer with the philosopher.

I know I shall be told that I am using rather great words, that I am exaggerating the importance of the mummer, nevertheless, the mummer is very severely criticized if he does not succeed, in competition with God's workshop, in putting on the stage a real image of man.

## 8

## MUSICAL RHYTHM

You cannot sing a song without rhythm.

Musical rhythm is a mechanical quality, which you can finally acquire through a sufficient training of your voice by the aid of a metronome.

Of course you are better off if you possess rhythm by instinct, by the grace of God, rather than by the grace of the metronome.

Even your speaking voice may then possess rhythm.

A song requires rhythm in the same degree as does a recitation, and therefore there should be no difficulty in keeping the rhythm in a song, where recitation and song occur together.

You will find, however, that very few interpreters of songs are able to overcome this difficulty. If they have to speak a few words within their singing text, they lose and cannot find again their rhythmic accent.

I have in my repertoire a song by Béranger,

called *Ma Grandmère*, which offers the best illustration for a song mixed with recitation.

I shall give first the words of the song, and then indicate which lines are spoken and which are sung.

It is necessary to penetrate well the meaning of the song.

It is a grandmother, a French lady of olden times, speaking to her grandchildren of her joyous past. The poet indicates that her frankness is rather due to a drop of wine, but in interpreting the song you must not forget that the grandmother is a woman of the eighteenth century. She has a gallant heart; she has loved love, which means the joy of loving and of being loved. In spite of her old age, her heart has not hardened; her old face bears still the divine smile of youth. It is a good, tender, charming, joyous grandmother whom your interpretation has to reveal. Her frankness grazes indiscretion, but not frivolity.

MA GRANDMÈRE

(Béranger)

Ma grandmère un soir à sa fête
De vin pur ayant bu deux doigts
Nous disait en branlant la tête,
Que d'amoureux j'eus autrefois.

Combien je regrette
Mon bras si dodu,
Ma jambe bien faite,
Et le temps perdu.

Quoi ! maman, vous n'étiez pas sage?
— Non vraiment ; et de mes appas
Seule à quinze ans j'appris l'usage,
Car la nuit je ne dormais pas.

*Refrain :*

Combien je regrette, etc.

Maman, Lindor savait donc plaire?
— Oui, seul il me plut quatre mois ;
Mais bientôt j'estimai Valère,
Et fis deux heureux à la fois.

*Refrain :*

Combien je regrette, etc.

Quoi, maman, deux amants ensemble?
Oui, mais chacun d'eux me trompa,
Plus fine alors qu'il ne vous semble,
J'épousai votre grand'papa.

*Refrain :*

Combien je regrette, etc.

Maman, que lui dit la famille?
— Rien, mais un mari plus sensé
Eût pu connaître à la coquille
Que l'œuf était déjà cassé.


Ma Grand-mère un soir a sa fê - te
de vin pur ay - ant bu deux doigts
nous di - sait en bran - lant la
tê - te que d'a - mour - eux j'eus au - tre fois.
REFRAIN.
Com - bien je re - gret - te mon bras si do -
du ma jam - be bien fai - te et le temps per
du coms bien je re - gret - te mon bras si do -
du ma jam - be bien fai - te et le temps per - du.

*Refrain :*

Combien je regrette, etc.

Comme vous, maman, faut-il faire?
— Eh ! mes petits-enfants, pourquoi,
Quand j'ai fait comme ma grand'mère,
Ne feriez-vous pas comme moi?

*Refrain :*

Combien je regrette, etc.

In interpreting the song you will lay stress on the different characterizations of each refrain.

The refrain in each verse is repeated.

In the first verse you sing the refrain gaily.

In the second verse, the first part of the refrain is sung with some melancholy; speak the second part, the repetition of the refrain, but sing again the last line : *Et le temps perdu !*

In the third verse sing the whole refrain; the first part mischievously, in the repetition accentuate the "regret" jovially.

In the fourth verse, speak the whole refrain with a comic bitterness, but observe well the rhythm.

In the fifth verse you will speak the first part with a certain mockery, and sing the second part.

In the sixth and last verse you will sing the refrain with a melancholy emotion, the repetition of the refrain you will speak in the same tender emotion up to the line, *Mon bras si dodu* . . . the two last lines,

*Ma jambe bien faite*
*Et . . . le temps perdu !*

must ring out almost in a sigh, but musically.

## 9

## THE EURHYTHMIC EXPRESSION OF THE BODY

I HAVE spoken in a former chapter of the Plastic Art and of the necessity for the dramatic artist to possess the sentiment of plastic art, which enables him to embody with beauty and with style his impersonations.

While, as we have seen, you can acquire plastic art by observation, by studying sculptural works, you cannot find outside of yourself the eurhythmics of the body, that is, the natural grace of the body, which is instinctive.

Every nation has its eurhythmic grace; you find an expression of it in some country dances; therefore an uncultured peasant girl may sometimes show graceful natural movements which the most refined lady may lack.

The grace of each body is personal to the body. A tall woman will have an eurhythmic expression different from that of a small one. A tall singer cannot have the same gestures as a short one. I would not advise the short singer, with short arms and short legs, to try

imitating the graceful movements of a tall singer with long arms and long legs.

Just as the same dress does not fit every woman, the same gesture cannot fit every body.

There is quite a voluminous literature of French so-called *Chansons à danser*. I would not like to explain them as "dancing songs." They are not danced, but the body has a rhythmic part in the interpretation of them.

Even your motionless body has to exhale grace, then how much more when it moves in correspondence to the tune and words of a song.

I shall illustrate what I have explained by eurhythmic expression of the body in a song called, *Le Cycle du Vin*.

The interpretation of the song does not require a great effort of imagination. There is nothing to compose, nothing to create, everything is written and expressed in the song. You have to carry out only what the words almost direct you to do, but with inborn grace.

LE CYCLE DU VIN

(Chanson de métier du XVI$^{e}$ siècle)

Le vigneron va planter sa vigne,

1 { Vigni, vignons, vignons le vin.
La voilà la jolie vigne au vin ;
La voilà, la jolie vigne.

De vigne en branche.
La voilà la jolie branche,
2 Branchi, branchons, branchons le vin.
La voilà la jolie branche au vin,
La voilà, la jolie branche.

De branche en grappe,
La voilà la jolie grappe,
3 Grappi, grappons, grappons le vin.
La voilà la jolie grappe au vin,
La voilà, la jolie grappe.

De grappe en hotte,
La voilà la jolie hotte,
4 Hotti, hottons, hottons le vin.
La voilà la jolie hotte au vin.
La voilà, la jolie hotte.

De hotte en cuve,
La voilà la jolie cuve,
5 Cuvi, cuvons, cuvons le vin.
La voilà la jolie cuve au vin,
La voilà, la jolie cuve.

De cuve en tonne,
La voilà la jolie tonne,
6 Tonni, tonnons, tonnons le vin.
La voilà la jolie tonne au vin,
La voilà, la jolie tonne.

De cruche en verre,
Le voilà le joli verre,
7 Verri, verrons, verrons le vin.
Le voilà le joli verre au vin,
Le voilà, le joli verre.

De verre en bouche,
La voilà la jolie bouche,
8 Bouchi, bouchons, bouchons le vin.
La voilà la jolie bouche au vin,
La voilà, la jolie bouche.

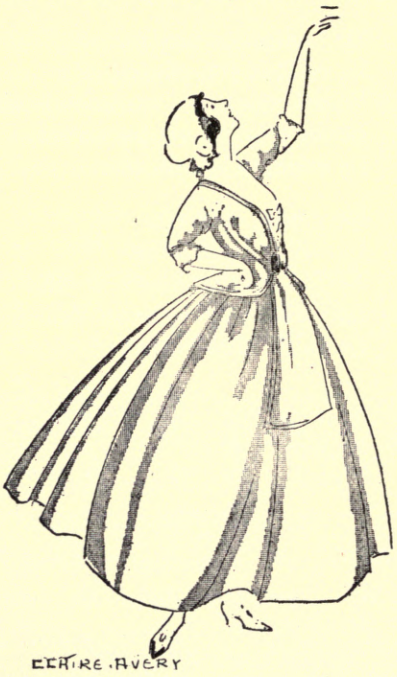
De bouche en ventre,
Le voilà le joli ventre,
9 Ventri, ventrons, ventrons le vin.
Le voilà le joli ventre au vin,
Le voilà, le joli ventre.

De ventre en terre,
La voilà la joli'terre,
10 Terri, terrons, terrons le vin.
La voilà la joli'terre au vin,
La voilà, la joli'terre.



I have numbered in each verse the three lines where gestures accompany the singing.

The explanations of the gestures follow here under the corresponding number.




1. You imitate the vine grower digging his soil.

2. You indicate by a gesture of your hand, which you lift a little higher at each new line, that the line is growing.

3. You show the grapevine, you keep it high in the air, you pretend to hold the stem of the grape between thumb and fore-finger.



4. You march around, rhythmically, making believe you carry on your back the heavy basket full of grapes.

5. You pretend to tread the grapes with your feet (as it was done in old times in France).

You are rhythmically stamping your feet in an imaginary bucket.

6. You pretend to embrace an imaginary cask with your arms. You will dance around it, it contains the wine.



7. Here you will pretend to keep a glass in your hand. You will keep it at the level of your eyes, you will look at it as if you admire the color of the wine.

8. Here you bend your body backward, you will empty your glass in your mouth.

9. You will slightly tap on your stomach, betray some gluttony, your joy of having absorbed this fine creation of God.

10. Same as 1.

## 10

## THE SCIENCE OF TEMPO IN DECLAMATION

THE diction of a dramatic or lyric artist is perfect, if he or she adds to a clear enunciation the great science of tempo.

Without tempo the declamation will have no style, no color.

A poem, a song will be a monotonous string of meaningless words.

What means taking tempo?

It means giving light and shade to the phrase of the author by pauses of short or longer duration.

Even a perfect enunciation or a most artistic coloration of the voice cannot make up for lack of tempo.

The words of the text form the material of the thought, the tempo indicates its structure.

By the tempo you intensify the thought; it is as if it ripens during your interpretation.

Before giving a few examples to illustrate the importance of tempo in diction, I would

like to say that in speaking of a "science of tempo," I am not thinking of any theory or technicalities as the basis of such a science.

The science of tempo is based solely on a thorough comprehension of the thought of the author.

I do not think that tempo can be applied mechanically, as it should vary with the nature of the thought expressed in the text.

To illustrate the appliance of tempo in declamation, I shall give first the words of a text and then the same words between which I have inserted marks to indicate short pauses ⌊⌋, a pause of double duration ⌊——⌋, of triple duration ⌊———⌋, etc., etc.

The first example is a fable by Lafontaine:

LE LOUP ET L'AGNEAU

La raison du plus fort est toujours la meilleure:
Nous l'allons montrer tout à l'heure.
Un agneau se désaltérait
Dans le courant d'une onde pure.
Un loup survient à jeun, qui cherchait aventure,
Et que la faim en ces lieux attirait.
Qui te rend si hardi de troubler mon breuvage?
Dit cet animal plein de rage:
Tu seras chatié de ta temerité.
Sire, répond l'agneau, que votre majesté
Ne se mette pas en colère;

Mais plutôt qu'elle considère
Que je me vas désaltérant
Dans le courant,
Plus de vingt pas au-dessous d'elle;
Et que par conséquent, en aucune façon,
Je ne puis troubler sa boisson.
Tu la troubles! reprit cette bête cruelle;
Et je sais que de moi tu médis l'an passé.
Comment l'aurais-je fait si je n'étais pas né?
Reprit l'agneau; je tette encore ma mère.
Si ce n'est toi, c'est donc ton frère.
Je n'en ai point. C'est donc quelqu'un des tiens;
Car vous ne m'épargnez guère,
Vous, vos bergers, et vos chiens.
On me l'a dit: il faut que je venge.
Là-dessus, au fond des forêts
Le loup l'emporte, et puis le mange,
Sans autre forme de procès.

Now I shall give the text of the same fable and indicate where to take tempo.

I shall indicate it even in the title:

LE LOUP ⌊__⌋ ET L'AGNEAU

La raison du plus fort ⌊__⌋ est toujours la meilleure:
⌊_____⌋ Nous l'allons montrer ⌊__⌋ tout à l'heure.
⌊_____⌋ Un agneau se désaltérait
⌊__⌋ Dans le courant d'une onde pure.
⌊__⌋ Un loup survient à jeun, ⌊__⌋ qui cherchait aventure,
⌊__⌋ Et que la faim ⌊__⌋ en ces lieux attirait.

⌊———⌋ Qui te rend si hardi de troubler mon breuvage?
⌊—⌋ Dit cet animal ⌊—⌋ plein de rage:
⌊—⌋ Tu seras chatié ⌊—⌋ de ta temerité.
⌊———⌋ Sire, ⌊—⌋ répond l'agneau, ⌊—⌋ que votre majesté
⌊—⌋ Ne se mette pas en colère;
⌊———⌋ Mais ⌊—⌋ plutôt qu'elle considère
⌊—⌋ Que je me vas désaltérant
⌊—⌋ Dans le courant,
⌊—⌋ Plus de vingt pas au-dessous d'elle;
⌊—⌋ Et que ⌊—⌋ par conséquent,⌊—⌋ en aucune façon,
⌊—⌋ Je ne puis troubler sa boisson.
⌊————⌋ Tu la troubles! ⌊—⌋ reprit cette bête cruelle;
⌊—⌋ Et je sais ⌊—⌋ que de moi ⌊—⌋ tu médis l'an passé.
⌊———⌋ Comment l'aurais-je fait ⌊—⌋ si je n'étais pas né?
Reprit l'agneau; ⌊—⌋ je tette encore ma mère.
⌊————⌋ Si ce n'est toi, ⌊—⌋ c'est donc ton frère.
⌊————⌋ Je n'en ai point. ⌊———⌋ C'est donc ⌊—⌋ quelqu'un des tiens;
⌊—⌋ Car ⌊—⌋ vous ne m'épargnez guère,
⌊—⌋ Vous, ⌊—⌋ vos bergers, ⌊—⌋ et vos chiens.
⌊———⌋ On me l'a dit: ⌊————⌋ il faut que je me venge.
⌊————⌋ Là-dessus, ⌊—⌋ au fond des forêts
⌊—⌋ Le loup l'emporte, ⌊—⌋ et puis le mange,
⌊———⌋ Sans autre forme de procès.

Now I shall illustrate the taking of tempo by another example, again a fable of Lafontaine.

I shall give again the plain words of the text first, and then give the words after having inserted my stops. I shall, however, add this time an indication of how to broaden the pronunciation of certain words, how to puff certain syllables, drag some there, delay others there, for the sake of showing that we can obtain by tempo a coloring of the text which corresponds to the meaning of it, in this case a caustic satire.

The fable:

LE CORBEAU ET LE RENARD

Maître corbeau, sur un arbre perché,
Tenait en son bec un fromage.
Maître renard, par l'odeur alleché,
Lui tint à peu près ce langage:
Hé! bonjour, monsieur du corbeau,
Que vous êtes joli! que vous me semblez beau!
Sans mentir, si votre ramage
Se rapporte à votre plumage,
Vous êtes le phénix des hôtes de ces bois.
À ces mots le corbeau ne se sent pas de joie;
Et, pour montrer sa belle voix,
Il ouvre un large bec, laisse tomber sa proie.
Le renard s'en saisit, et dit: Mon bon monsieur,
Apprenez que tout flatteur
Vit aux dépens de celui qui l'écoute:
Cette leçon vaut bien un fromage, sans doute.
Le corbeau, honteux et confus,
Jura, mais un peu tard, qu'on ne l'y prendrait plus.

Here follows the text of the same fable with indications of tempo and accents.

LE CORBEAU ⌊⌋ ET LE RENARD

Maître corbeau, ⌊⌋ sur un arbre perché,
⌊⌋ Tenait en son bec ⌊⌋ un fromage.
⌊⌋ Maître renard, ⌊⌋ par l'odeur alleché,
⌊⌋ Lui tint à peu près ⌊⌋ ce langage :
⌊⌋ Héeeeeee ! bonjouououour, ⌊⌋ monsieur du corbeau,
⌊⌋ Que vous eeeetes joliii ! ⌊⌋ que vous me semblez beauuuu !
Sans mentir, ⌊⌋ si votre ramage
⌊⌋ Se rapporte à votre pluuuuumage,
Vous êtes le phénix ⌊⌋ des hôtes de ces bois.
⌊⌋ À ces mots le corbeau ne se sent plus de joie ;
⌊⌋ Et, ⌊⌋ pour montrer sa belle voix,
⌊⌋ Il ouvre un laaaaarge bec, ⌊⌋ laisse tomber sa proie.
⌊⌋ Le renard s'en saisit, ⌊⌋ et dit : ⌊⌋ Mon bonnnn monsieur,
⌊⌋ Apprenez ⌊⌋ que tout flatteur
Vit aux dépens de celui ⌊⌋ qui l'écoute :
⌊⌋ Cette leçon ⌊⌋ vaut bien un fromage, ⌊⌋ sans doute.
⌊⌋ Le corbeau, ⌊⌋ honteux et confus,
⌊⌋ Jura, ⌊⌋ mais un peu tard, ⌊⌋ qu'on ne l'y prendrait plus.

It is of course understood that in regard to taking tempo, there is no difference between

recitation and lyric declamation. You will place your pauses in a song just as in a recitation according to the sense of words, according to the requirements of the thought.

Here are the words of an eighteenth century song, *Le roi a fait battre tambour,* in which I have again indicated graphically short pauses or pauses of greater duration, which vivify and animate the expression.

## LE ROI A FAIT BATTRE TAMBOUR

Le roi ⌴ a fait battre tambour,
Le roi ⌴ a fait battre tambour,
⌴ Pour voir ⌴ toutes ses dames;
⌴ Et la première qu'il a vu
⌴ Lui a ravi son âme.

Marquis, ⌴ dis-moi, ⌴ la connais-tu?
⌴ Marquis, ⌴ dis-moi, ⌴ la connais-tu?
⌴ Qui est ⌴ cett'joli'dame?
⌴ Le marquis lui a répondu:
⌴ Sire, Roi, ⌴ c'est ma femme!

Marquis, ⌴ tu es plus heureux qu'moi,
⌴ Marquis, ⌴ tu es plus heureux qu'moi,
⌴ D'avoir femme si belle;
⌴ Si tu voulais ⌴ me l'accorder,
⌐ Je me chargerais d'elle.
⌴ Sire, ⌴ si vous n'étiez pas le roi,
⌴ Sire, ⌴ si vous n'étiez pas le roi,
⌴ J'en tirerais vengeance,




_____ Mais __ puisque vous êtes le roi,
_____ A votre obéissance.

_____ Marquis, __ ne te fache donc pas,
__ Marquis,__ ne te fache donc pas ;

⌊___⌋ T'auras ta recompense !
⌊___⌋ Je te ferai ⌊___⌋ dans mes armées
⌊___⌋ Beau maréchal de France.

Habille-toi bien proprement,
⌊___⌋ Habille-toi bien proprement,
⌊___⌋ Coiffure à la dentelle ;
⌊_____⌋ Habille-toi bien proprement,
⌊___⌋ Comme une demoiselle.

Adieu, ma mie, ⌊_____⌋ adieu, mon cœur,
⌊_____⌋ Adieu, ma mie, ⌊_____⌋ adieu, mon cœur,
⌊_____⌋ Adieu, ⌊___⌋ mon espérance ;
⌊___⌋ Puisqu'il te faut servir le roi,
Séparons-nous d'ensemble.

⌊_____⌋ La reine ⌊___⌋ a fait faire un bouquet
⌊___⌋ La reine ⌊___⌋ a fait faire un bouquet
⌊___⌋ De belles fleurs de lyse
⌊_____⌋ Et la senteur ⌊___⌋ de ce bouquet
⌊___⌋ A fait mourir marquise.

## 11

## HOW TO ACQUIRE FACIAL MIMICRY

THE face is the mirror of the soul.

Every thought of our brain, every stroke of our heart might be reflected in our face, might be seen in our eyes, on our lips.

The dramatic artist must be in absolute control of his face. I do not mean to say that he must mechanically be its master.

The facial expression is not a question of muscular skill. It is the transfiguration of a thought, of a sentiment, into physiognomy. Of course your eye is only an eye. But did you ever think how powerful its language is, stronger in its silent strength than the noisiest speech? The eyes speak or are silent, the eyes laugh or dream. The eyes sing; they welcome you, or rebuff you, encourage or discourage you; stare at you, lie to you, freeze you, disconcert you, trouble you, accuse you, defend you, caress you, or kill you. The eyes listen to you, question you and answer you; they brighten, they darken, they open, they close.

They dance, vacillate, stare. They are immovable. They are veiled, they fade away, they brighten and sparkle. Oh, what an opportunity for those who know well how to play on such an instrument!

And the mouth?

The mouths of women especially! What expressions can you not give them!

Are they thin-lipped and pale? What charming accent of refinement, of delicacy, of malice, of wit, of discreet tenderness, of mysterious charm, distinguished attractiveness.

Are they thin-lipped and pale? What a choice to make! Saint Theresa? Lady Macbeth? Nun or vampire?

What infinite cruelties can they express! What things angelic or diabolical!

Vanity, pride, cupidity, cold-hearted stupidity, avarice. All can be expressed by thin, pale lips. Pointed irony, sharp sarcasm. The whole of Paradise, the whole of Hell.

Is the mouth thick-lipped and red?

Oh, the good broad laugh!

Affectionate, attractive, hospitable, endlessly tender, the ardent mouth of the loving, mouth of the mother of inexhaustible maternal love!

Is the mouth thick-lipped and red?

Oh, the strong irony or sparkling one; the

Suspicion

Fear — Fright









Raging Rage

Cruelty

THE SMILE OF DOUBT

THE TWO APPEALS

The appeal of the eyes — the appeal of the lips.



EXPRESSION IN SUSPENSE

*Question:* You will come . . . is it not?

EXPRESSION . . . DEFINED

*Answer:* Oh, I do not know . . . it depends!

SERENITY

THE PRESENTIMENT OF DANGER









MORAL PAIN

PHYSICAL PAIN

## THE FOUR COMIC EXPRESSIONS

### I. Gray

Y a pas de mal à cela, Colinette,
Y a pas de mal à cela.

(Colinette Song of the eighteenth Century)

### II. Red

Mon mari est bien malade !
Bien malade, Dieu merci !

(*La Mort du Mari*, Song of the eighteenth Century)









### III. Purple

Notre potage roule dans ses vagues.
Tant de cheveux que chaque mois
Les clients s'en font faire des bagues
A l'hotel du No. 3.

(Chanson: Latin Quarter)

### IV. Vermillion

The Farce.



EXPRESSION OF NEUTRAL AMIABILITY

Nothing in the eyes — nothing in the mouth.



ECSTASY

gentle irony, the sarcasm like fireworks, like bombs; thunderous gayety.

Is the mouth thick-lipped and red?

It will signify gayety, health, kindness, tenderness, love, broad farce, roaring laughter, carnal appetite, debauchery of the city as well as of the village.

Whether it be the mouth of a great lady or mouth of a farm girl, large and red, thin and pale, every woman's mouth is a surprising accessory in the art of facial mimicry.

The dramatic artist has to develop the resources of his face, he has to master his eyes and his mouth. His eyes must be able to correspond to the thousand shades of human thought, the mouth must be under the control of an ever inventive intellectuality.

Your face must be the soft clay submitting to your will, your power of transfiguration.

## 12

## ABOUT MAGNETISM AND CHARM. THE SOUL THAT MUST ANIMATE THE TRUE ARTIST

WHAT is magnetism, what is charm?

Magnetism and charm are imperative powers given to your personality.

They are a force of attractability, which every one carries in himself.

Each of us has received by nature the gift of some talent; our duty is to discover which talent is ours.

So many persons born perhaps to be musicians, painters, sculptors, or writers become lawyers or bankers because their fathers were bankers or lawyers; and they, in their turn, will be just as ignorant, or just as indifferent towards anything their children's soul might reveal.

No wonder that Humanity is crowded with failures.

Rare are those who hear their inner voice, who are able to understand its precious language, who are able to become aware of the

rare present, bestowed on them by nature, to become aware of it while they have still their whole life before them to develop it.

If nature bestows on us such a gift, be sure we receive also the necessary accessories for its development.

Again it is for us to find them out and to cultivate them.

God places in us that which is luminous and which we keep, sometimes by sheer ignorance, in darkness.

He plants in us that which is necessary to be magnificent, but also that which enables us to be hideous; it is for us to choose.

The great French poet, Paul Verlaine, has shown us in his sublime "Confessions," that the higher the human soul strives, the greater is the struggle.

The way to Darkness is made easier than the one which leads to Light.

What is the carrier of your magnetism, your charm?

It is your personality.

What is your personality?

The essence of all you are and all you feel, the combined effect of body and soul.

Develop yourself in beauty rather than in ugliness, have a great soul, a greater heart.

The charm and magnetism of a personality are sometimes aided by physical beauty; but if your mouth speaks the language of a beautiful soul, if your eyes reflect the sentiments of a generous heart, the beauty of your soul and heart will prevail over the body.

There are women on the stage who are magnificent in their beauty, but who nevertheless lack personality, magnetism, and charm, because they lack soul.

What then is Soul?

The soul is a compound of all our intellectual faculties.

The soul is a compound of all our intelligences — intelligence of the heart, intelligence of the brain, intelligence of manners, intelligence of taste, intelligence in Art.

An artist's soul must have multiple intellectual qualities.

The gift, the talent of an artist, will be without power, if his soul is inferior, if it has not all virtues and all generosities, if it is low and narrow-minded.

We all know beautiful voices and really talented singers who have no power over their audiences. The public says: He or she is . . . very clever . . . but so cold! They are cold,

because they have no soul, no heart. For that reason they lack sensitiveness.

They have a fine instrument, which leaves you quite indifferent! Why? Because you feel you are nothing to them!

They do not care for you, nor for any one!

If you were in daily contact with them, if you were their friend or parent, you would find out that they are dry, selfish, hard.

The soul of an artist, the magnetism and charm of his personality are sometimes more responsible for his success than his talent alone.

The high salary paid to an artist is not always a proof of his talent; it is more often a proof of his popularity, or a tribute to his sensationalism.

The success of an artist is not always due to the multiple qualities of his art.

You remember some years ago a monkey, called Consul, made quite a sensation on the Music Hall stages of London and Paris. I remember having met somewhere on a stage an "artist" who was jealous of Consul's success, and who was sincerely in despair that she could not draw the same crowds as the monkey.

The crowd flocks, of course, to sensational and cheap popularity, which, I think, was so wonderfully illustrated by Consul, the high-salaried monkey.

Real art has a limited public.

Take a city like New York with, as I understand, five or six millions of inhabitants. You have only one opera house and only two fairly sized halls devoted to pure music, but you have dozens and dozens of palaces devoted to the cinematograph and to what you call so euphemistically "Vaudeville."

Why?

Because the public for real art is limited in number.

Therefore the path for the true artist is not a smooth one.

If his ambition aims higher than cheap popularity, he must be prepared to struggle against ignorance, incompetence, indifference, and bad taste.

The crowd, which is always more numerous than the intellectual aristocracy, is not yet ready for beauty. No nation has as yet a popular élite, a crowd totally educated, and the first-class artist appeals only to a limited first-class public. Now, if it is a great soul which makes the great talent of an artist, the public, attracted by this artist, has certainly the same great soul. They understand each other, they love each other. Each artist has a clientele corresponding to his soul. There are



of course among those some exceptions, who will be disappointed if you do not degrade your talent, your art, your soul, by giving them not the best, but the worst of yourself for the sake of money or cheap success.

An artist must resist and disdain these approaches of the Devil! An artist has the duty to be above his audience. The audience in a theater is like a crowd in a church. The artist, like the Priest, must know that there are wolves among the sheep . . . and must not fear them.

The artist is loved for what he or she has created, and for that reason the artist must not be impressed by any outside influence! It does not matter who gives you advice on your art, don't listen! Remain yourself and nothing else! Only the students, the debutantes, have to consider advice. But when your personality has ripened, your soul developed, close your ears! Be what you are! Express what you feel, go straight to your aim of beauty; reveal in all you do, all your sorrow and all your joy; appeal to the heart, move the heart by telling and expressing your art; and let the public know by your art that you are able to share its sufferings . . . to understand every struggle for life, love, and happiness. Make the public conceive that you too are a

poor human being . . . full of hope, full of deception . . . a poor human being dreaming of kindness, of beauty, of love. Show your public all the precious smiles you have, hidden behind your tears, and let the public guess how you must have suffered to be able to translate its own suffering! Hide from the public the effort you make to smile, so that *they* should smile. . . . Speak to their hearts, speak to their souls!

Speak the language of generosity, of pity, of charity, of liberty, and purity.

Rise so as to uplift others!

"Give, give, give!" shall be the motto of the true artist.

Make out of the essential human virtues your monopoly!

Train yourself to be exceptional:

By doing for others what has not been done for you!

By giving others what has been refused to you!

Help each one, knowing how hard is the struggle!

And with that soul which animates you, the true artist, you will animate your conquered world!

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